

NOVEMBER 3, 2008

The American Conservative

The Right Choice?

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John Patrick Diggins

Rod Dreher

Francis Fukuyama

Kara Hopkins

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn

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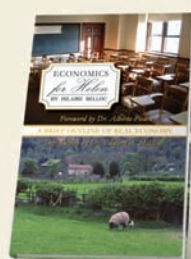
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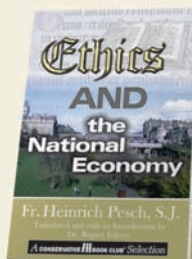
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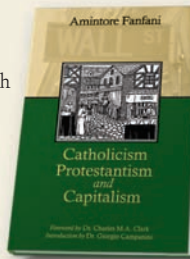
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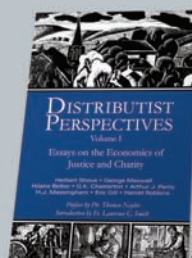
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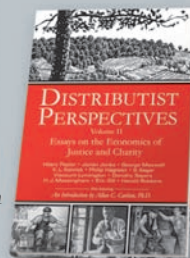
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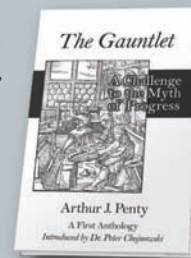
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Contents

November 3, 2008 / Vol. 7, No. 21



AFP LIVE

The Right Choice?

Traditional conservatives have no clear favorite in the November election. Is there a lesser evil? Should we vote third party? Would we be better off just staying home? *TAC* asked 18 conservatives, libertarians, and independent thinkers how they plan to vote and why.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 6 Peter Brimelow | 11 Scott McConnell |
| 7 Reid Buckley | 12 Declan McCullagh |
| 7 John Patrick Diggins | 12 Robert A. Pape |
| 8 Rod Dreher | 13 Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr. |
| 8 Francis Fukuyama | 13 Gerald J. Russello |
| 9 Kara Hopkins | 14 Steve Sailer |
| 9 Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn | 14 John Schwenkler |
| 10 Leonard Liggio | 15 Joseph Sobran |
| 10 Daniel McCarthy | 15 Peter Wood |

COLUMNS

- 21 Patrick J. Buchanan:** Cut the Empire, Balance the Budget
- 27 Stuart Reid:** How to Lose Friends and Aliens
- 35 Fred Reed:** What Foreign Aid Can't Buy

NEWS & VIEWS

- 4 Fourteen Days:** Paulson Makes Banks an Offer They Can't Refuse; Iceland Meltdown; Judith Miller Goes Home
- 25 Deep Background:** Uncle Sam Enriches Uranium Market; Obama Loses Intelligence

ARTICLES

- 16 H.L. Mencken:** Democracy and Its Discontents
- 17 Sheldon Richman:** Power Default Swap
- 19 John Schwenkler:** The Secessionist Spirit of '76 Lives
- 22 Michael Brendan Dougherty:** Virginia is for Democrats
- 24 Austin Bramwell:** Conservatism Without a Movement

ARTS & LETTERS

- 28 Steve Sailer:** Charlie Kaufman's "Synecdoche, New York"
- 29 Freddy Gray:** *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* by Tim Tzouliadis
- 31 Howard Anglin:** *Home* by Marilynne Robinson
- 32 Christopher Layne:** *America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy* by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft

[GOVERNMENT]

FREEZE! THIS IS A BAILOUT

Call it a reverse mugging: Treasury left the nation's largest banks no choice but to take \$250 billion in taxpayers' money. Henry Paulson began placing personal calls Sunday afternoon, summoning top banking executives to Washington. They expected a briefing on the bailout plan. Instead, they got an ultimatum.

The *New York Times* described a scene any Hollywood screenwriter would have rejected as too unrealistic: "The chief executives of the nine largest banks in the United States trooped into a gilded conference room at the Treasury Department at 3 p.m. Monday. To their astonishment, they were each handed a one-page document that said they agreed to sell shares to the government, then Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. said they must sign it before they left."

Richard Kovacevich, chairman of Wells Fargo, protested. His bank wasn't struggling and didn't need a crutch. Ken Lewis, head of the also healthy Bank of America, spoke to "60 Minutes" about the meeting: "No negotiation was allowed?" his interviewer asked. "No negotiations, no." Morgan Stanley's John Mack later told the *Times* that his bank didn't need the cash either: they had just signed a \$9 billion deal with Mitsubishi.

But if solvent lenders were allowed to opt out, Treasury reasoned, troubled institutions would be exposed, further undermining national confidence and harming the steady banks. After a contentious session, the nine gave in. By 6:30, each had signed Paulson's papers. The U.S. government was officially in the banking business.

According to the plan, in return for its coerced investment, Treasury will receive preferred shares that pay a 5 percent dividend, which will rise to 9 percent after five years if banks haven't bought out the government. Thus Paulson can



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assure the American public that they will receive a reasonable return—on money they didn't want to give to those who didn't want to take it.

[TRENDS]

REALITY BITES

The giants of finance aren't the only ones being bailed out. Gov. Jon S. Corzine recently offered New Jersey's food banks an emergency \$1 million aid package, after several closed their pantries because of over-demand. The number of New Jersey residents applying for food stamps has increased by as much as 30 percent, while donations have dipped 20 percent amid rising food costs.

Indeed, across America, as winter approaches, millions of families are feeling the cold. The rate of foreclosures continues to pick up speed: 107,500 homes were lost in September alone, up 82.6 percent from a year ago. In Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, unemployment is touching 9 percent. The streets of Cleveland and Detroit, among others, look increasingly empty.

But it's not just America's industrial heartland that is being ripped out. In Seattle, a boomtown in recent years, jobs are vanishing as Microsoft and other major companies cut costs. In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has asked the Treasury for \$7 billion to stave off state bankruptcy.

In many parts of the country, moreover, crime, poverty's brother-with-arms, seems to be coming of age again. In Atlanta, Georgia, burglaries have increased by almost 33 percent since 2007. The *New York Daily News* reports that the number of murders in the Bronx has gone up nearly 14 percent.

Meanwhile, the Wall Street roller-coaster keeps whizzing down and up at terrifying speeds. Financial journals still question whether or not the U.S. is facing a deep, serious recession. Many Americans could tell them the answer.

[WORLD]

THE ICELAND GOETH

Last year, the United Nations Human Development Index named Iceland the most developed country in the world. This year, like a South American banana republic or African kleptocracy, the North Atlantic island nation has had to turn to the International Monetary Fund for a rescue package—estimated at \$6 billion, including contributions from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and possibly Russia and Japan—to salvage a wrecked currency and shattered banking system. Think things are bad in America under Bush, Paulson, and Bernanke? Just wait. Iceland shows us just how much further we may yet fall.

Iceland's banks didn't bet on the U.S. real estate bubble. But they did depend

on easy credit at home and abroad, and as Iceland's currency, the krona, tanked—losing 35 percent of its value against the euro over the past year—the house of IOU's came down. The currency, weak already, collapsed, finally trading at 340 krona to 1 euro. As credit markets tightened around the world, Iceland's banks could not borrow any more foreign currency, and could not do anything with their now worthless national currency. For an island state that must import necessities from abroad, a debased krona and bad credit score meant immediate hardship. And with few native industries, Iceland was in no position to get hard currency through trade.

So Reykjavik has turned to the IMF, which places strict—and often ineffective—controls on the nations that take its money. The crisis jeopardizes Iceland's sovereignty in other ways as well, as the government considers pegging the krona to the euro, and thus to the whims of the European Central Bank, or joining the European Union out of sheer necessity. Financial globalization precipitated the crisis, of course—though the bulk of the blame belongs to central banks and national governments, and not only Iceland's. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown played a particularly shameful role in Iceland's downfall by using some of his recently-acquired anti-terrorism powers to seize the British assets of Iceland's largest bank, Landsbanki.

It's a small globalized world after all, and while the United States may not be as small as Iceland, what happened there can happen here. The future looks cold.

[PROPAGANDA] **MILLER TIME**

Remember those reports about the secret biowarfare laboratories in Saddam's basement? Or the ones about aluminum tubes he procured? How about the Iraqi nuclear weapons facili-

ties that would one day threaten life as we know it? Those were all aired on Fox News, right? Actually, no. They first ran in the *New York Times*, under the byline of Judith Miller. But now, after serving time to protect her war-stirring sources, her reportage will be exclusive to Fox. Fair and balanced—and approved by the vice president's men.

This is the national-security correspondent whose embed agreement was so sensitive it had to be signed by Donald Rumsfeld. When in theater, Miller played her role to perfection. Military officers said she acted as a liaison between the Army unit in which she was embedded and Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmad Chalabi. One officer complained, "She ended up almost hijacking the mission."

By hiring the disgraced "expert" in WMD's and intelligence reporting, Fox is making a parody of itself. Miller has responded to her critics. She says the new job has nothing to do with her service to Iraqi self-promoters and their neocon enablers: "I think they want me to be independent, and that's what I am." Tell us another one, Judy.

[PARANOIA] **PAVLOVIAN RESPONSE**

The fiendish Russian prime minister has struck again! According to neoconservatives like Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan, Vladimir Putin dreams of subjugating the world. Indeed, he has already begun—with his household pet. Putin recently had his totalitarian techs whip up a satellite-tracked dog collar for his black labrador, Koni. "She looks sad," Reuters reported Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov as saying. "Her free life is over." *Nyet*, said Putin: "She is wagging her tail. That means she likes it." Expect some future Republican presidential contender, high on anti-Russian hysteria, to announce we are all black labs now. ■

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The American Conservative, Vol. 7, No. 21, November 3, 2008 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. TAC is published 24 times per year, biweekly (except for January and August) for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (24 issues) in the U.S., \$54.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$89.97 other foreign, via airmail. Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

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Inquiries and letters to the editor should be sent to letters@amconmag.com. For advertising sales call Ronald Burr at 703-893-3632. For editorial, call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on October 23, 2008.
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The Right Choice?

This election offers particularly dismal prospects for conservatives: the Senate's most liberal member versus a Republican who combines the worst policies of George W. Bush with an erratic temper and a thinly veiled contempt for the Right. No third-party candidate has been able to break past the margins to mount an insurgent campaign.

Given these impoverished alternatives, no easy consensus emerges. So rather than contrive to deliver an official endorsement, we asked friends from a variety of disciplines and perspectives to discuss how they are voting, whether they see their vote as advancing a particular issue or fitting into a larger strategy, and what conflicts their choice might entail. Some may surprise, others confound, perhaps a few will persuade.

Peter Brimelow As an immigrant (although a U.S. citizen), I find it touching how Americans deliberate so earnestly over which candidate for president is worthy of their world-historic vote. Civics 101 teachers everywhere must be proud. But the plain fact is that, in most states, an individual vote doesn't matter a hoot. In most states, it's never in doubt that one or the other major-party candidate will win. And even when it is in doubt, elections are almost never decided by a single vote.

So the rational thing to do, in the immortal words of George Wallace (who was good at it) is: *send them a message*. Politics now is notoriously dominated by the marketing mindset, which is why we have content-free and purely reactive celebrity campaigns. But marketers will recognize a market segment when they see one. And by single-issue voting for minor-party candidates, you identify a market segment, which is why the GOP is swayed by the relatively small Right to Life market bloc: everybody knows that, if dissed, these people will bolt.

In August, the Census Bureau finally acknowledged what has been obvious for some time: because of the massive nontraditional immigration triggered by the 1965 Immigration Act, and the simultaneous collapse of law enforcement against illegal immigration, American whites will become a minority by 2042. The U.S. government is literally, to paraphrase Brecht's quip about how the East German Communists should respond to the 1953 riots, dissolving the people and electing a new one. This is a demographic transforma-

tion without precedent. It should at least be discussed. But incredibly, both major party candidates have tacitly agreed to bury the issue.

So I would vote for Chuck Baldwin, the candidate of the Constitution Party, who wants no amnesty, no more illegal immigration, and a reduction in legal immigration. In states where Baldwin is not on the ballot, I'd think about voting for the Libertarian Party's Bob Barr, who had an excellent immigration record as a Republican congressman and who has not totally capitulated to the culturally illiterate left-libertarianism that now dominates the movement after the tragic demise of Murray Rothbard and paleolibertarianism. (Ralph Nader is poor on immigration. All of these candidates oppose the war.) I would write in Barr, except that most states make that almost as difficult as getting on the ballot and don't always count write-in votes anyway.

Oh, and Obama and Whatshisname? I'm indifferent. I don't think President Obama will dare push an amnesty through because the Republicans would oppose it, whereas enough stupid Republicans will fall in line behind a McCain amnesty to give the Democrats bipartisan cover. But at least a McCain presidency would make it clear even to Republican loyalists what Pat Buchanan concluded in 2000: there is no solution for America but a new party. ■

PETER BRIMELOW is the editor of *VDARE.COM*, where his 1995 book, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster*, is available as a free pdf download.

Reid Buckley Barring an act of God, or an ugly racist reaction among the white middle classes, Barack Obama will be the next president of the United States. In full premonition of which, I am voting for the McCain ticket.

Why this exercise in futility?

Loyalty, I suppose. In September 2007, I sent John McCain a check, with a note saying that though I disagreed with him on many issues, I admired his integrity. At that time, I thought Hillary Clinton was going to be the Democratic choice, and I preferred Senator McCain to the nakedness of Mrs. Clinton's ambition.

I am plenty mad at the Republican Party and would enjoy watching the entire double-talking leadership and its unctuous apparatus throughout the states fried in oil. I still disagree with maverick McCain plenty on the issues, and every time he says "my friends," I wince almost as wretchedly as when George W. Bush ends his sentences with that awful *moue* of his upper lip, producing a smirk which in turn suggests a revolting fullness of self-satisfaction.

A major gripe about the good senator is that he has not set forth a coherent agenda. What does he plan to do about anything? What vision does he have for our country? He is running on his decency, and though we Americans admire moral virtue, in the dragpit of Washington politics, decency can be an impediment.

Barack Obama, on the other hand, for all his muddy shifting with the political winds, has made his vision clear, and it is doctrinaire Democratic left-wing socialism and therefore too depressing for words. I hew to the belief that he is also a decent man and probably politically more savvy than John McCain. He may learn. He may be knocked off his horse on the way to Damascus. But I can't vote for the prospect of Obama's education. So I vote McCain. Unlike the Beltway snobs (an insular pathology that now defines the East Coast from Bangor, Maine to Key West), I place my trust in Sarah Palin. Dadgummit, by golly, she speaks the American language of the plains and the frontier. I trust it, and her. ■

REID BUCKLEY is founder of the Buckley School of Public Speaking and author, most recently, of *An American Family: The Buckleys*.

John Patrick Diggins The banking crisis is affecting the country in ways that no one predicted, except for the government regulators who were forced from their jobs for warning

about the consequences of deregulation. America has gambled with Wall Street and lost, yet neither presidential candidate sees fit to discuss the causes of the catastrophe. Political campaigns are not a time for reflection. Just as Americans express frustration with the war in Iraq when they should be angry with themselves for supporting it on the flimsiest of evidence, so it is with the economy. Neither McCain nor Obama has the slightest idea of what to do, and neither dares to acknowledge that substantial taxes may be necessary to pay for such massive spending. This election is, like so many others, a study in systematic evasion.

In foreign affairs, the choice between McCain and Obama is the choice between the frying pan and the fire. One aspirant to the presidency is happy to see America stay in Iraq for even a hundred years. The other would pull American troops out of Iraq in order to leap into Afghanistan, a land of pot growers, bandits, Taliban zealots, jihadist training camps, and ferocious Pashtun fighters that neither the British empire nor the Soviet Union could subdue.

Whoever wins the White House may carry on the cynical tradition of the Republican Party. In the '50s, candidate Eisenhower promised he knew what to do about the Korean War. Americans expected a military solution, only to discover that the general aimed to withdraw. In the '70s, Nixon and Kissinger charged the Democrats with losing Vietnam and assured us that they had turned the war around by leaving South Vietnam stable and militarily strong—only for the whole country to fall to communism weeks after America departed. In the '80s, Reagan withdrew from Lebanon with the same rationale: even though 241 Marines had been slaughtered in their barracks, the task force succeeded in doing the "job it was sent to do in Beirut."

Republicans have no trouble losing a war and calling it a victory, and some of them are voting for McCain for that reason. Obama, in contrast, is stuck with a war he opposed, and politics may force him to stay the course. Still, I prefer the professor to the warrior. McCain claims he is thinking only about the good of the country, then chooses as his running mate a gun-happy huntress who supported the Alaskan independence movement, which advocates secession from the United States. No wonder she is idolized by those who disdain the very federal government that built the Alaskan Highway. As Orwell observed, those receiving benefits always hate the benefactor. ■

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS is a professor of history at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and the author of *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*.

Rod Dreher This will be the first year since I was old enough to vote that I will not cast a ballot in a presidential election. I quote a character from Richard Linklater's "Slacker" in my defense: "Withdrawing in disgust is not the same thing as apathy."

I can't vote for Barack Obama. He is a pro-abortion zealot and wrong on all the issues that matter most to social conservatives. Mind you, one should not be under any illusion that things will markedly improve under another Republican administration. But there is no question that on issues related to the sanctity of life and traditional marriage, an Obama administration, with a Democratic Congress at its back, would be far worse.

The best case that can be made for John McCain is that he would serve as something of a brake on runaway liberalism. But the country would be at significantly greater risk of war with the intemperate and bellicose McCain in the White House. That was clear months ago, but his conduct during the fall campaign—especially contrasted with Obama's steadiness—has made me even more uneasy. His selection of Sarah Palin, while initially heartening to populist-minded social conservatives, has proved disastrous. Though plainly a politician of real talent, the parochial Palin is stunningly ill-suited for high office, and that's a terrible mark against McCain's judgment.

As both a conservative and a Republican, I confess that we deserve to lose this year. We have governed badly and have earned the wrath of voters, who will learn in due course how inadequate the nostrums of liberal Democrats are to the crisis of our times. If I cannot in good faith cast a vote against the Bush years by voting for Obama, I can at least do so by withholding my vote from McCain.

"The Right desperately needs to repent, rethink, and rebuild—and only the pain of a shattering loss will force conservatives to confront reality."

While it is foolish to look forward to a decisive electoral defeat for one's side, I can't say that the coming rout will be a bad thing. The Right desperately needs to repent, rethink, and rebuild—and only the pain of a shattering loss will force conservatives to confront reality. Not only must there be a renewal of our political vision and message—and this time, dissenters from within the Right must be heard—but there

must also be a realization at the grassroots that we have long given too much importance to politics and not enough to building cultural institutions at the local level.

The present and future economic traumas brought upon the nation by elites in both parties will minimize the role politics will play in the lives of ordinary Americans. The binge spending that Democrats and Republicans alike engaged in over the past 30 years, and the concomitant failure to be good stewards of the country's long-term economic future, will enervate the government in the decades to come, though the growth of Leviathan in the short term is assured. Local, intermediate institutions—Burke's little platoons—will become more important to the survival of communities. There is a rich treasury of traditionalist conservative wisdom ready to be liberated from the hegemony of the conservative establishment that failed. ■

ROD DREHER is an editor at the Dallas Morning News and the author of *Crunchy Cons*.

Francis Fukuyama I'm voting for Barack Obama this November for a very simple reason. It is hard to imagine a more disastrous presidency than that of George W. Bush. It was bad enough that he launched an unnecessary war and undermined the standing of the United States throughout the world in his first term. But in the waning days of his administration, he is presiding over a collapse of the American financial system and broader economy that will have consequences for years to come. As a general rule, democracies don't work well if voters do not hold political parties accountable for failure. While John McCain is trying desperately to pretend that he never had anything to do with the Republican Party, I think it would be a travesty to reward the Republicans for failure on such a grand scale.

McCain's appeal was always that he could think for himself, but as the campaign has progressed, he has seemed simply erratic and hotheaded. His choice of Sarah Palin as a running mate was highly irresponsible; we have suffered under the current president who entered office without much knowledge of the world and was easily captured by the wrong advisers. McCain's lurching from Reaganite free-market to populist tribune makes one wonder whether he has any underlying principles at all.

America has been living in a dream world for the past few years, losing its basic values of thrift and prudence and living far beyond its means, even as it has lectured the rest of the

world to follow its model. At a time when the U.S. government has just nationalized a good part of the banking sector, we need to rethink a lot of the Reaganite verities of the past generation regarding taxes and regulation. Important as they were back in the 1980s and '90s, they just won't cut it for the period we are now entering. Obama is much better positioned to reinvent the American model and will certainly present a very different and more positive face of America to the rest of the world. ■

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA *is a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.*

Kara Hopkins A better writer said of a charmless woman that rousing any affection for her would be like “smoking an unlit cigar, walking a dead dog, swimming in an empty pool, or listening to the radio when it is off.” The same goes for the Republican nominee. When John McCain appears on screen, all vacant grin and Eeyore cadence, I reach for the mute button. I hate his wars. I don't trust his maverick pose. When he says “my friends,” he doesn't mean me. But I am voting for him.

Call it damage control. Come January, the Senate will be firmly in Democratic hands, perhaps with a filibuster-proof majority. And if current projections hold, some 30 House seats could shift left. Republicans face a long exile from the Hill—not that their presence has made much difference. They coluded with an ostensibly conservative president to launch a war we cannot win and swell federal spending by 40 percent.

Still, installing the Senate's most leftist member in the White House, with a Congress eager to do his bidding, is to invite radical mischief. After a four-year tour through the outer limits of the liberal imagination, the Republic might not recognize herself.

That's not to say that President McCain would inaugurate an age of welcome gridlock. Indeed, he would count it a point of pride to work with the Democratic Congress to enact his worst policies—and he has many. But there is a sliver of hope that they will occasionally clash. He is, after all, a man ever in search of targets for his rage.

The great risk is that he would find them not in Harry Reid's office but in Tehran. That is the worst-case scenario, but there is at least some chance that it will not come to pass. With Obama, the worst-case scenario—boundless expansion of federal prerogatives—is promised at every whistle stop. A compliant Congress would guarantee that the airy speeches become ugly reality.

So put me down as an advocate of partisanship and shut-downs, of do-nothing Congresses and presidents with time to practice their putting. Let ideologues mire themselves in fruitless debate, cancel each other's mad ambitions, and tie themselves in such splendid knots that no one's utopia gains an estate. ■

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn Without doubt, my decision to vote for Barack Obama for president began when I watched his televised speech to the Democratic Convention in 2004. Today on the cold page of the computer printout, it loses something. Outside of the electrifying moment of his delivery, the speech contains less than I remembered. But what is there explains the reverberations in so many parts of my inherited mental and moral universe.

Obama's telling of his—and our—American story rang true to our struggles, ideals, and times, from his opening expression of “deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention” to his closing prayer that out of trouble and cynicism “our country will reclaim its promise.” For living in these times has entailed a growing acquaintance with what Bob Dylan termed “the morals of despair.” From the “culture of greed,” as Kevin Phillips put it, and the obscene rich/poor gap to unilateralism and a deadly and costly war, family and community disintegration, immoral business and political practices, and economic collapse, sources of self-respect and respect in the world are hard to find. Obama echoes the call of some of our keenest social critics for a remoralization of politics and society. Wendell Berry, for one, has emphasized the need for an attitude of “stewardship” as an alternative to exploitation, manipulation, aggression, and selfishness. This message, not traceable to current notions of Republican and Democrat, recalls our commitments to the humbling, soul-leveling inspiration that is democracy, the dignity of hard work, individual and communal responsibility, and unity beyond race and other false boundaries.

Whether Obama follows through on this clarion call if elected is the question. An all-Democratic federal government cannot help but raise worries about best intentions lost in the wake of a latter-day welfare state or a new lease on life for the entitlement mentality. In an ideal world, I might have more confidence in a McBama ticket, with Obama's antiwar stance, pro-middle-class policies, and deep sense of humanity and McCain's long record of independent-mindedness, fiscal conservatism, and promotion of individual initiative and responsibility. Obama reminds us

that far from threatening it, dissent is a crucial component of love of country; McCain practices this principle with courage. The candidates' reflections on their own life stories bear an uncanny resemblance that appears to transcend political purposes. Both seem truly humbled by the struggles they faced and indebted to this country for whatever grace they have enjoyed. As such, either would be a great advance beyond the current mindless, heartless, and soulless administration that has caused nearly fatal damage to our democratic aspirations.

“A leader in a democracy is no better and no worse than the people he serves.”

Yet neither one is what we really need. A leader in a democracy is no better and no worse than the people he serves, since it is the people and not the leaders that govern: despite the nonsense of our celebrity culture and the ever present corrupting potential of political popularity, a leader is just one of the people. For any significant change to occur, all must help through their everyday behavior, just as these two men have, at their best, embodied our ideals through their words and actions. Taking inspiration, each of us must make our humble contribution to our collective destiny and prove the I, me, mine mentality of recent times does not reflect what we wish to be. This seems the basis of the vision and spirit of defiant hope Obama is invoking. If he does win the election it will be up to us to remind him, our other political leaders, and ourselves of just what he stands for—or what we thought he stood for when we elected him—just as he is reminding so many Americans of what we stand for. And what we do not. ■

ELISABETH LASCH-QUINN *teaches history at Syracuse University. She is the author of Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Diversity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked the Civil Rights Revolution.*

Leonard Liggio I plan to vote for Bob Barr, the Libertarian Party presidential candidate. Although the former Georgia congressman has had his differences with Ron Paul—who was the Libertarian nominee 20 years ago—Barr and the LP still represent the closest thing in this election to Paul's positions.

The current financial crisis requires a clear explanation if there is to be a solution now and for the future. Congressman Paul has articulated its causes: the Federal Reserve's soft money policies flooded the banks with credit, and they sought ever weaker debtors. The solution is the gold standard, which will limit the power of the Federal Reserve to cheapen the value of money.

Throughout the primary season and afterwards, Ron Paul spoke truth to power on behalf of the American people regarding the emerging financial crisis. Many citizens, especially the young, have listened to his analysis. This response to Paul's monetary analysis coincides with the results of a recent Rasmussen Reports poll, which found 59 percent of those polled agreed with Ronald Reagan's statement that government is the problem.

Neither of the presidential candidates of the major parties is in agreement with the majority of the American people. The two candidates have been the products of poor systems of nomination in 2008.

Lately, I wondered if there would be a change. In late September, I was at Reagan National Airport traveling to a Hillsdale College conference when John McCain said he was suspending his campaign due to the crisis. Was it possible that he would support the Republican majority in the House of Representatives by opposing the Bush administration's bailout plan? Instead of placing himself at the head of these Republicans, he conceded to the administration.

In the presidential contest, the Libertarian Party is the clear choice for opponents of the Paulson plan and the government policies that precipitated the crash. ■

LEONARD LIGGIO *is executive vice president of the Atlas Economic Research Foundation and distinguished senior scholar at the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University.*

Daniel McCarthy Given the choice between John McCain and Barack Obama, the Democrat clearly represents the lesser evil, if not by much. The closest parallel to this election might be the contest 40 years ago between Richard Nixon and Hubert H. Humphrey—both of them pro-war, government-expanding, anti-civil-liberties Keynesians. Obama, with his not-to-be-believed promises of getting out of Iraq, is a peace candidate in the same way Nixon, with his secret plan to end the Vietnam War, was. McCain certainly has much in common with Humphrey: he too would continue

the policies of Lyndon Johnson, which are also the policies of George W. Bush.

Fortunately, we do not have to sail straight into Scylla or Charybdis. Yet the Libertarian and Constitution parties, which should have been able to capitalize on discontent with the GOP this year, if ever, have again shown themselves to be irrelevant or counterproductive. The Libertarians nominated a professional politician and ran a slick campaign—or at least a campaign run by a slickster, Russ Verney—but in the process alienated actual libertarians. (Not only did Barr feud with Ron Paul, Verney sent out a campaign e-mail lauding Bush’s “incredible leadership” after 9/11. Who needs Libertarians like that?) The Constitution Party chose the opposite path, repulsing a takeover attempt by Alan Keyes and remaining true to principle—at the cost of the party’s California ballot line. The lesson is plain: a minor party’s commitment to principle is inversely proportional to its political effectiveness.

Voting symbolically is one thing—that’s what almost all of us do anyway since statistically our votes are not likely to sway the outcome. But organizing symbolically, committing hundreds of thousands of dollars and man-hours to third parties, is a waste of capital and talent that could be put to better use in Republican or Democratic primaries. The difference between Ron Paul’s 1988 Libertarian campaign and his 2008 Republican bid illustrates the point. Forget the minors; take over the majors.

With that in mind, I’m writing in Ron Paul for president and Barry Goldwater Jr. for vice president. Why agonize over whether Barr or Baldwin is the better constitutionalist, when you can cast your ballot for the very best? A vote for Paul is an endorsement of all he has accomplished (and might yet achieve) and a rejection of the often honorable but never effective course of the third parties. ■

Scott McConnell Remember the neoconservatives? Three years ago they were a hot topic, as people all over the world tried to understand why the United States had invaded a country that had nothing to do with 9/11. Then interest waned. First Paul Wolfowitz, then Doug Feith, then Don Rumsfeld left the administration. George W. Bush, who asked his dad “What’s a neocon?” in the summer of 2004, took their counsel less. Core neocon concepts—a blend of forceful rhetoric about expanding democracy, contempt for most existing democratic countries, and enthusiasm for starting wars—began to seem unhinged from reality. They had dreamed up the Iraq

War to transform the Middle East, argued it was pointless for Israel to make peace with the Palestinians, agitated for attacks on Iran. Without repudiating them directly, Robert Gates and Condi Rice eased them from the stage.

John McCain wants to bring them back, in triumph, on horseback. Unlike Bush, McCain is a neocon true believer; Wilsonian bellicosity has visceral appeal for him. A McCain victory would mean, in short order, an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities. Joshua Muravchik, a candid and well-connected neoconservative whom I’ve known for 25 years, affirmed this unequivocally at a Nixon Center debate last month. Iran is now the principal neoconservative obsession—as it is for Israel’s hawks, who ludicrously paint Tehran as Nazi Berlin. McCain jokes about bombing Iran, but the consequences would not be amusing. Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the joint chiefs, has warned that an Israeli strike would put American forces in Iraq at grave risk. If America bombs, the consequences would be worse. As Secretary of Defense Gates warned a group of senators recently, “We’ll create generations of jihadists, and our grandchildren will be battling our enemies here in America.”

“Unlike Bush, McCain is a neocon true believer; Wilsonian bellicosity has visceral appeal for him.”

That’s not all. Top McCain advisers like Robert Kagan seek to reignite a Cold War with Russia: Kagan recently told a Washington audience he wouldn’t want to live in a world in which Russia had a preponderance of influence over Georgia. Elliott Abrams, son-in-law of Norman “World War IV” Podhoretz, is reportedly in line to head McCain’s National Security Council. As a Bush appointee, he’s worked at stymieing the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Expect a McCain administration to back the Netanyahu policy of turning the West Bank into isolated bantustans instead of a Palestinian state.

For these reasons, I’m voting for Obama. While he doesn’t inspire me, he does impress. His two-year campaign has been disciplined and intelligent. He has surrounded himself with the mainstream liberal types who staffed the Clinton administration. Like countless social democratic leaders before him, he probably was more left-wing when he was younger. Circumstance and ambition have pushed him to the center. If elected, he will inherit an office burdened with massive financial and foreign-policy problems. Unlike John McCain, he won’t try to bomb his way out of the mess. ■

Declan McCullagh

I am not voting for president in 2008.

This was not an easy decision, but all the candidates are flawed, at least if you believe in limited government, civil liberties, free markets, and a foreign policy far less bellicose than what we have today.

Take John McCain. He said during the New Hampshire primary that keeping troops in Iraq for 100 years would be fine. He supported retroactive immunity for telecommunications companies that violated federal law by opening their networks to the National Security Agency. He voted for the Communications Decency Act, for restrictions on law-abiding citizens selling firearms at gun shows, and for the Real ID Act. And then there's the McCain-Feingold law's restrictions on political speech.

You'd hope that a Republican would at least be solid on taxes. McCain is not. On Internet taxes alone, in two of three votes I tabulated for a 2006 tech scorecard, McCain voted in the pro-tax direction. The broader scorecard from Americans for Tax Reform shows that McCain voted against the 2001 Bush tax cuts, against a permanent repeal of the death tax, and against the subsequent 2003 acceleration of the tax cuts. Those were arguably the three most important tax-related votes in the last decade.

“Obama appears to support other tenets of American foreign policy, including keeping troops in scores of foreign countries at American taxpayers' expense.”

Barack Obama has called for a complete withdrawal of American troops by a date certain and says in his platform that the date “would be the summer of 2010—more than 7 years after the war began.” But Obama appears to support other tenets of modern American foreign policy, including keeping troops in scores of foreign countries at American taxpayers' expense and intervening on behalf of repressive regimes despised by their own peoples. Then there's his position on taxes and regulation.

The Libertarians could have been fun this year. But they picked Bob Barr, who has spent his entire adult life agitating against small-L libertarian traditions and has acted bizarrely during portions of the campaign.

Plus, I now live in California, making my vote approximately as important as when I used to live in the Democra-

tic stronghold of Washington, D.C. So on Nov. 4, I'll be joining a majority of my fellow nonvoting Americans and actually doing something productive that day. ■

DECLAN MCCULLAGH is the chief political correspondent and senior writer for CNET and writes a weekly column titled “Other People's Money” for CBS News.

Robert A. Pape

I strongly support Barack Obama for president. In the past, I have supported both Republicans and Democrats, choosing the candidate with the leadership qualities and foreign-policy principles most likely to advance the national security of the United States. Of course, we have no crystal balls, but leaders with sound judgment on core policies and courage to look beyond political winds of the moment greatly improve the odds of long-term success. Obama scores uncommonly high on the “judgment-courage” index, qualities that will be needed as our next president seeks to repair the damage from the triple train wreck of our overstretched military, underperforming economy, and floundering international reputation that is now undermining our national security.

My respect for Obama rests on three main points. First, he has consistently demonstrated clear-eyed judgment on the most important national-security issue of our time—Iraq. In October 2002, when 70 percent of the public and most Democratic politicians supported the war, Obama delivered one of the first high-profile speeches against the invasion. I had just joined 32 scholars of national-security affairs in the *New York Times* sounding the same warnings. But Obama did more, putting his future political career on the line for the best interests of our country.

Second, Obama has developed an important new “Over-the-Horizon” strategy for achieving America's core national-security goals in the Persian Gulf without provoking terrorists or overstressing our Army. From my work on suicide terrorism, it is clear that America's military presence in Muslim countries—especially heavy combat forces—is a powerful factor in the rise of anti-American suicide terrorism around the world. The Persian Gulf, however, is too important for the U.S. to cut and run. We need a new strategic approach to the region, one that moves American combat forces “off-shore,” relying primarily on air and naval forces stationed on ships or bases on the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula. Obama's policy is heading precisely in the right direction and is crucial to our future security.

Third, Obama is committed to approaching global threats with global solutions, encouraging multilateralism and dialogue where possible. With America's abysmal reputation in the world, this is truly a needed change. International opinion polls show that majorities or strong pluralities in most countries oppose Iranian nuclear weapons. This is not simply an American or Israeli obsession. But we need a new diplomatic approach to develop sound American policies that take advantage of this underlying international consensus, working with others in a meaningful way, precisely the new direction that Obama is calling for. ■

ROBERT A. PAPE is professor of political science at the University of Chicago and the author of *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*.

Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr. The critical problem we face today is the same one all mankind has faced: the state, those monopolists who claim the right to break the laws that they make and enforce. How to restrain them is the critical problem of all sound political thinking. Making matters worse, this gang now has a monopoly on the money and the ability to print it, and they are abusing that power at our expense.

How does voting change the situation? Neither of the candidates for president wants to do anything about the problem. On the contrary, they want to make it worse. This is for a reason. The state owns the "democratic process" as surely as it owns the Departments of Labor and Defense and uses it in ways that benefit the state and no one else.

"The government should fear the people. Not voting is a good beginning toward instilling that fear."

On the other hand, we do have the freedom not to vote. No one has yet drafted us into the voting booth. I suggest that we exercise this right not to participate. It is one of the few rights we have left. Nonparticipation sends a message that we no longer believe in the racket they have cooked up for us, and we want no part of it.

You might say that this is ineffective. But what effect does voting have? It gives them what they need most: a mandate. Nonparticipation helps deny that to them. It makes them,

just on the margin, a bit more fearful that they are ruling us without our consent. This is all to the good. The government should fear the people. Not voting is a good beginning toward instilling that fear.

This year especially there is no lesser of two evils. There is socialism or fascism. The true American spirit should guide every voter to have no part of either. ■

LLEWELLYN H. ROCKWELL JR. is president of the Ludwig von Mises Institute and editor of *LewRockwell.com*.

Gerald J. Russello I will not be voting for any federal candidate and will probably be writing in third parties for local elections, if I even step into the voting booth.

There is a strong heritage among some New Yorkers—both aristocratic WASP Republicans and ethnic progressive liberals—that voting is a civic duty that cannot be avoided, even if you prefer none of the candidates. Try as I might, I cannot make any sense of this position. If you believe that none of the candidates presents an attractive option, why vote at all?

In this election, we face choosing between a "maverick" with a penchant for militarism who has been part of the Washington power structure for over two decades, and an inexperienced figure who wants to save us from ourselves, or, as my friend Gene Healy puts it, "the Messiah vs. the prophet of doom." The only thing they agree on is that Washington is where the power is. Add to that a supine Congress busy giving away its war-making power to the executive, what's left of the economy to the Treasury secretary, and the decision over any controversial issue to the courts. It is hard to see why voting for one rather than the other would make any discernible difference.

To say that this system has nothing to do with the original constitutional order is a laughable understatement. The candidates trade talking points, but their common assumptions about the centralization of power, the omnipotent power of the president, and the use of American power abroad remain unchallenged. The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre once wrote, "when offered a choice between two politically intolerable alternatives, it is important to choose neither." That advice is well worth taking. ■

Gerald J. Russello is the author of The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk and editor of The University Bookman.

Steve Sailer Both major party candidates have campaigned against partisan bickering. And yet we are paying a high price for Washington's bipartisan consensus. Perhaps the least controversial set of programs in all of Washington—the manifold government efforts under both the Clinton and Bush administrations to relax mortgage credit standards to increase minority and low-income home ownership—has turned out among the most disastrous.

America has been driven into the ditch by Washington's grand strategy—Invade the World, Invite the World, and In Hock to the World or, as Daniel Larison put it, “Imperialism, Immigration, and Insolvency”.

Obama is probably somewhat better than McCain on imperialism. It would be hard to be worse. They're comparably terrible on immigration. And Obama is likely worse

“Obama has been in bed for decades with ACORN, the radical Left outfit that makes its living shaking down the mortgage industry. Obama sued Citibank to get them to lower standards for handing out mortgages to blacks.”

on insolvency. He wrote in his 442-page autobiography, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, about his lifelong efforts to become a leader in his “people's struggle,” which he assumes, to put it crassly but clearly, is to extract money for his race. Thus Obama has been in bed for decades with ACORN, the radical Left outfit that makes its living shaking down the mortgage industry. Obama sued Citibank during his antidiscrimination lawyer career to get them to lower their standards for handing out mortgages to blacks.

Thus, I intend to do in 2008 what I did during the Bush-Kerry whoop-tee-doo: write in the name of a public figure who is actually trying to solve a major, long-term problem, my friend Ward Connerly. Just as Social Security can't afford too many retirees per worker, America won't be able to afford its affirmative-action system when the racial ratio of minority beneficiaries per white benefactor reaches excessive levels. As America becomes majority minority (by 2042, by latest Census projection), the cost of affirmative action will become crippling. By helping get govern-

ment racial preferences banned by voter initiative in California, Washington, and Michigan, Ward has made the future a little less grim. ■

John Schwenkler When Bob Barr began his campaign for the presidency this past spring, he did so with far more fanfare than usually accompanies the quixotic bids of third-party candidates not named Ralph Nader. And with good reason: Barr is no crank or clumsy ideologue but rather an intelligent and successful politician whose breaks with the Bush administration and Republican establishment had gotten a considerable amount of attention. Barr had the potential, it was thought, to peel away significant numbers of anti-interventionists, civil libertarians, committed federalists, and small-government conservatives and libertarians from the repugnant John McCain and the weak-kneed Barack Obama, forcing them to do more than pander to the mythical center.

It's reasonable to think that Barr's failure to do this was well-deserved, that his votes for the Patriot Act and the Iraq War resolution made him an unacceptable choice for anyone who took such issues seriously. But in many ways, Barr's avowal of libertarianism was not entirely disconnected from his congressional career: he had been a strong critic of the Waco siege, had worked with the ACLU to oppose the Clinton administration on a number of issues, and his position on marriage was arguably in keeping with soundly federalist principles. Not only did Barr's campaign rhetoric provide a striking contrast to the inability of the major-party candidates ever to talk about liberty, but he was also able to present himself as the consistently conservative option, recalling a time not that long ago when a commitment to limited government meant something more than opposing earmarks and implementing temporary tax cuts and “freezes” on discretionary spending.

In a nearby parallel universe, no doubt a similar Republican candidate is trouncing the descendants of Al Gore and Joe Lieberman for being a bunch of spying, warmongering, profligate spenders—but this is the universe we're stuck in, and there's not much of a place in the GOP for rhetoric like that.

But such rhetoric is sorely needed, and so even if a vote for Barr is ultimately a vote for the sort of cross-partisan coalition he could have helped to build, it's a vote worth casting. Next time, perhaps, the candidate who stands for liberty will do better than 1 percent. ■

JOHN SCHWENKLER is a graduate student in philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley.

Joseph Sobran During the so-called presidential debates, I failed to hear a single mention of the U.S. Constitution, which should have been the chief subject. What are the proper powers of government, of the federal government, and of the president? These questions don't even come up anymore. The debaters wrangle heatedly about "the economy"—a phrase that never appears in the text of the Constitution but preoccupies today's pundits and politicians.

Neither of the major-party presidential candidates, let alone President Bush, could have held an intelligent conversation with Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, or John Jay, the authors of *The Federalist*, our best known commentary on that Constitution. I happen to think that time has proved abundantly that their opponents, the "anti-Federalists," were profoundly right in their fears of where adoption of the Constitution—a grievous act of centralization—would lead: to say no more about it, to a gigantic war between the states, to two world wars, and to the endless usurpation of power implicit in all yakking about "the economy."

Constitution Party nominee Chuck Baldwin can no more undo this sorry history than he can reverse the direction of the globe's axial rotation. (I believe in miracles, but I don't expect them in politics.) And he and I might well disagree on the authority of the Constitution itself. But he is a godly, reasonable, wise, and intelligent man—as worthy a candidate as I ever expect to see. He knows what the Tenth Amendment means; he understands the crucial 45th number of *The Federalist*, which reminds us that the

“Neither of the major-party presidential candidates, let alone President Bush, could have held an intelligent conversation with Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, or John Jay, the authors of *The Federalist*.”

powers delegated to the federal government are “few and defined,” whereas those remaining with the states are “numerous and indefinite.” Furthermore, he knows what the Holy Scriptures mean when they speak of a woman being “with child”; and no amount of pseudoconstitutional gobbledygook about “choice” or “privacy” can shake him on this point. His horror at legal abortion is still fresh.

I've been reading Chuck Baldwin's essays for several years. My first reaction to them was to wish we had rulers who could read him, grasp what he was saying, and take it to heart. I never dreamed I would have the chance to vote for him myself. ■

JOSEPH SOBRAN is a columnist and former senior editor of National Review.

Peter Wood I'm a reluctant McCain supporter. He might do considerable damage to our nation, not least because of his view on immigration, but the damage of a McCain administration is nothing compared to the vast institutionalization of the radical Left that Obama would usher in. McCain's attractions for me lie almost entirely in his being the only viable alternative to Obama. I do like Palin, and that makes it a little easier to support McCain. She connects the Republican ticket to something deep and genuine in the American experience.

My principle in weighing the candidates is this: I'd like to preserve as much of traditional American culture and values as possible in an era in which these are under terrific assault from the mass media, the schools, higher education, and the nation's anointed elite. Obama is the near perfect embodiment of this assault: a leftist race agitator who is also a polished Harvard Law School elitist. The perfection extends to his personal qualities. Though he stands politically for policies that reduce people to swinishness and though he has wallowed in political corruption for many years, he comes across as disciplined or even ascetic in his habits. This seems to make his entanglement with radicals like Jeremiah Wright and William Ayers incidental.

In the world of higher education, I am used to meeting Obama-like people who combine facile intellectualism, pride in high-minded utopian principles, and outright thuggery. They dream of ruling America the way they rule the campuses. Obama seems likely to make the dream come true.

McCain? An old man with tangled roots in America's past. He trusts his intuition way too much and like the elder Bush is often a sucker for liberal bromides that he doesn't recognize as such. I see him as a very flawed man and a flawed candidate, but he does genuinely love America. That's something. And it is utterly absent from Obama. ■

PETER W. WOOD is executive director of the National Association of Scholars and author of *A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now*. The views expressed herein are his own.

Boss Mob

The sage of Baltimore on the ideology that makes mediocrity a virtue.

By H.L. Mencken

DEMOCRACY CAME INTO the Western world to the tune of sweet, soft music. There was, at the start, no harsh bawling from below; there was only a dulcet twittering from above. Democratic man thus began as an ideal being, full of ineffable virtues and romantic wrongs—in brief, as Rousseau's noble savage in smock and jerkin, brought out of the tropical wilds to shame the lords and masters of the civilized lands. The fact continues to have important consequences to this day. It remains impossible, as it was in the 18th century, to separate the democratic idea from the theory that there is a mystical merit, an esoteric and ineradicable rectitude, in the man at the bottom of the scale—that inferiority, by some strange magic, becomes a sort of superiority—nay, the superiority of superiorities. Everywhere on earth, save where the enlightenment of the modern age is confessedly in eclipse, the movement is toward the completer and more enamored enfranchisement of the lower orders. Down there, one hears, lies a deep, illimitable reservoir of righteousness and wisdom, unpolluted by the corruption of privilege. What baffles statesmen is to be solved by the people, instantly and by a sort of seraphic intuition. Their yearnings are pure; they alone are capable of a perfect patriotism; in them is the only hope of peace and happiness on this lugubrious ball. The cure of the evils of democracy is more democracy!

This notion, as I hint, originated in the poetic fancy of gentlemen on the upper levels—sentimentalists who, observing

to their distress that the ass was overladen, proposed to reform transport by putting him into the cart. A stale Christian bilge ran through their veins, though many of them, as it happened, toyed with what is now called Modernism. They were the direct ancestors of the more saccharine Liberals of today, who yet mouth their tattered phrases and dream their preposterous dreams. I can find no record that these phrases, in the beginning, made much impression upon the actual objects of their rhetoric. Early democratic man seems to have given little thought to the democratic ideal, and less veneration. What he wanted was something more materialistic—more to eat, less work, higher wages, lower taxes. He had no apparent belief in the acromatic virtue of his own class, and certainly none in its capacity to rule. His aim was not to exterminate the baron, but simply to bring the baron back to a proper discharge of baronial business. When, by the wild shooting that naturally accompanies all mob movements, the former end was accidentally accomplished, and men out of the mob began to take on baronial airs, the mob itself quickly showed its opinion of them by butchering them deliberately and in earnest. Once the pikes were out, indeed, it was a great deal more dangerous to be a tribune of the people than to be an ornament of the old order. The more copiously the blood gushed, the nearer that old order came to resurrection. The Paris proletariat, having been misled into killing its king in 1793, devoted the next two years to killing those who had misled

it, and by the middle of 1796 it had another king in fact, and in three years more he was king *de jure*, with an attendant herd of barons, counts, marquises, and dukes, some of them new but most of them old, to guard, symbolize, and execute his sovereignty. And he and they were immensely popular—so popular that half France leaped to suicide that their glory might blind the world.

Meanwhile, of course, there had been a certain seeping down of democratic theory from the metaphysicians to the mob—obscured by the uproar, but still going on. Rhetoric, like a stealthy plague, was doing its immemorial work. Where men were confronted by the harsh, exigent realities of battle and pillage, as they were everywhere on the Continent, it got into their veins only slowly, but where they had time to listen to oratory, as in England and, above all, in America, it fetched them more quickly. Eventually, as the world grew exhausted and the wars passed, it began to make its effects felt everywhere. Democratic man, contemplating himself, was suddenly warned by the spectacle. His condition had plainly improved. Once a slave, he was now only a serf. Once condemned to silence, he was now free to criticize his masters, and even to flout them, and the ordinances of God with them. As he gained skill and fluency at that somber and fascinating art, he began to heave in wonder at his own merit. He was not only, it appeared, free to praise and damn, challenge and remonstrate; he was also gifted with a peculiar rectitude of thought and will, and a high talent for

ideas, particularly on the political plane. So his wishes, in his mind, began to take on the dignity of legal rights, and after a while, of intrinsic and natural rights, and by the same token the wishes of his masters sank to the level of mere ignominious lusts. By 1828 in America and 1848 in Europe the doctrine had arisen that all moral excellence, and with it all pure and unfettered sagacity, resided in the inferior four-fifths of mankind. In 1867 a philosopher out of the gutter pushed that doctrine to its logical conclusion. He taught that the superior minority had no virtues at all, and hence no rights at all—that the world belonged exclusively and absolutely to those who hewed its wood and drew its water. In less than half a century he had more followers in the world, open and covert, than any other sophist since the age of the Apostles.

Since then, to be sure, there has been a considerable recession from that extreme position. The dictatorship of the proletariat, tried here and there, has turned out to be—if I may venture a prejudiced judgment—somewhat impracticable. Even the most advanced Liberals, observing the thing in being, have been moved to cough sadly behind their hands. But it would certainly be going beyond the facts to say that the underlying democratic dogma has been abandoned, or even appreciably overhauled. To the contrary, it is now more prosperous than ever before. The late war was fought in its name, and it was embraced with loud hosannas by all the defeated nations. Everywhere in Christendom it is now official, save in a few benighted lands where God is temporarily asleep. Everywhere its fundamental axioms are accepted: (a) that the great masses of men have an inalienable right, born of the very nature of things, to govern themselves, and (b) that they are competent to do it. Are they occasionally detected in gross and lamentable imbecilities? Then it is only because they are misin-

formed by those who would exploit them: the remedy is more education. Are they, at times, seen to be a trifle naughty, even swinish? Then it is only a natural reaction against the oppressions they suffer: the remedy is to deliver them. The central aim of all the Christian governments of today, in theory if not in fact, is to further their liberation, to augment their power, to drive ever larger and larger pipes into the great reservoir of their natural wisdom. That government is

called good which responds most quickly and accurately to their desires and ideas. That is called bad which conditions their omnipotence and puts a question mark after their omniscience. ■

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Epic Bail

Nationalizing banks, impoverishing society

By Sheldon Richman

HERE IN THE LAND of the theoretically free, as Mencken called America, the central government is about to become part-owner of the nine largest banks and many smaller ones, too. It will acquire dividend-paying preferred stock in return for “injecting” cash into the allegedly seized-up capital markets. (If they’re so frozen, why does Ditech offer me low-interest loans on television every night?) The government will also guarantee bank debt for three years. All this is said to be necessary because of the current economic turmoil. Summoning his best Orwellian tone, President Bush assured the country: “These measures are not intended to take over the free market, but to preserve it.” That’s reason enough to wonder if these people know what they are doing. Even Hugo Chavez knows better.

The \$250 billion required to accomplish this extraordinary feat is to come from the \$700 billion the supine Congress recently gave Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs—one of the nine banks that

will enjoy the largess. The rest of the money will be used to buy bank-held paper backed by sour mortgages and other “toxic” instruments that have stopped producing income. Congress doesn’t have \$700 billion; it’s running a half-trillion-dollar deficit already. But that’s okay. The government can, presumably, borrow the money—driving up interest rates, including for mortgages, oops!—and pay the debt later in depreciated dollars. This is assured because the Federal Reserve is creating hundreds of billions of dollars out of thin air in order to rebuild confidence in the economy. Yes, you read that right.

The government will borrow a ton of money in the capital markets to give to the banks and free up the capital markets. To you and me that sounds as though the government is simply moving money from Place A to Place B in the global economy. But in the wonderland we call Washington, something magical happens when bureaucrats do that. You and I don’t understand how net wealth

can come from government redistribution, but that's why we're not calling the shots and Paulson is.

Still, common sense suggests that if the money is there for the government to borrow, it's there for others—so long as the government doesn't pull rank. Economist Steve Landsburg asked why faltering banks should be saved:

Banks don't lend their own money; they lend other people's (their depositors' and their stockholders'). Just because the banks disappear doesn't mean the lenders will. Borrowers will still want to borrow and lenders will still want to lend. The only question is whether they'll be able to find each other. ... As any user of match.com can tell you, the technology for finding partners has improved since [the 1930s]. When a firm wants to raise capital, why can't it just sell bonds over the web? Or issue new stock? Or approach one of the hedge funds that seem to be swimming in cash? Or borrow abroad?

Besides that, if the banks were really worthy, the private investors the government will borrow from would be eager get in on the action. So the Treasury must be diverting scarce capital from more promising to less promising projects.

The government's program has the American public on the hook in three different ways. First, if \$700 billion is diverted to politically chosen recipients, it's unavailable for investment that would benefit consumers. What we won't have because of this intervention is what Frederic Bastiat called "what is not seen." But the value forgone is a real cost to regular people.

Second, the new debt will eventually be repaid through taxes. Because of this new obligation, taxes either will be raised or will be harder to cut. Either way, Americans will have less of their own money, robbing them of opportunities to

save for retirement, buy medical care, or invest in a better education than the government is capable of giving their kids.

Third, when the Fed monetizes the debt and inflation kicks in, our purchasing power will dissolve, with all the havoc that creates for individuals and society. This camouflaged transfer of wealth from the public to the government's cozy clients is as much a tax as any outright levy.

In other words, the program to restore health to the economy will inevitably make us poorer.

Don't be seduced by the nonsense that the taxpayers are protected. Paulson & Co. assure us that "we" stand to make a killing when the economy comes roaring back. The mortgage-backed securities will be sold at a profit, and the bank shares will be sold back to the banks.

Two problems: The nature of bureaucracy gives no thinking person confidence that it has the perspicacity to buy low and sell high. If it's such a great idea, let Paulson and Bernanke resign their positions and make the killing as private entrepreneurs. The other problem is one of identity. Let's say the bureaucrats are right and in a few years the government will get all the money back and more. Where's the payoff for taxpayers? Does anyone think whoever is in charge will rebate it? That's not how government works. There will be 10,000 urgent purposes for that money. The presumptuous identification of the government with the taxpayer adds insult to the injury already inflicted. We are not the state.

It's not only wealth, moreover, that will be transferred from people to government, but power. Every intervention produces, to use Albert Jay Nock's terms, a gain in state power at the expense of social power. Nock writes,

Just as the State has no money of its own, so it has no power of its own. All the power it has is what society

gives it, plus what it confiscates from time to time on one pretext or another; there is no other source from which State power can be drawn. Therefore every assumption of State power, whether by gift or seizure, leaves society with so much less power; there is never, nor can be, any strengthening of State power without a corresponding and roughly equivalent depletion of social power.

In this transfer a pernicious alchemy occurs: social power is persuasion, but state power is brute force. It's not usually noted in polite company, but a shift of power from civil society to the state must entail a reduction in voluntary exchange and an increase in enforced transactions.

Paulson insists that his acquisition of equity, which smacks of 1920s Italian fascism, will involve no government influence over the banks. This is hard to believe, considering that the banks were given no choice but to participate in the program. (Not that they all opposed the deal.) But even if the government's influence is minimal, that doesn't reduce the threat that this precedent sets. As Robert Higgs documents in *Crisis and Leviathan*, government always increases its power in any (real or imagined) crisis, and when the crisis subsides, it never returns to its earlier dimensions—the "ratchet effect." New powers often remain on the books, ready to be dusted off—usually to the cheers of the corporate elite—at the next emergency, and, the public has been softened up ideologically for the next expansion of power. By crowding out market solutions, the state leaves the impression that it is indispensable for economic well being. We've been ratcheted again. ■

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Untied States

If at first you don't secede...

By John Schwenkler

WHOEVER WINS ON NOV. 4, few Americans will harbor any illusions about their national unity. No matter which pairing one chooses—red and blue, Right and Left, coastal elites and flyover salt-of-the-earthers—there is no getting around our status as a country divided, a people set apart from one another as much by regional culture as by religion or political ideology.

A perfect time, in other words, to talk about secession—which is what will happen when the Middlebury Institute's Third North American Secessionist Conference convenes in Manchester, New Hampshire a week and a half after the election. Thomas Naylor, whose Second Vermont Republic is one of the country's most active secessionist organizations, is candid about the motive for the scheduling: "The date was set," he tells me, "on the assumption that Hillary Clinton would be elected—and of course that's not going to happen." Nevertheless, the post-election timeframe is "looking more and more important every day" as popular outrage against the Wall Street bailout and anxiety over impending recession continue to build.

The Manchester conference brings together secessionists of all types. Writing in *Orion*, Bill Kauffman described the crowd from 2006 as "ponytails and suits, turtlenecks and sneakers, an Alaskan gold miner and one delegate from the neo-Confederate League of the South who wore a grey greatcoat, as if sitting for a daguerreotype just before the battle." Despite—or perhaps because of—their ideological differences, they all

share a common cause: to regionalize, to decentralize, to debunk the myth of a nation indivisible and replace it with a story that gives difference its due.

That story is by no means a new one. The idea of political separatism is, as Middlebury Institute founder Kirkpatrick Sale puts it, "as American as America." From the 13 colonies declaring their independence from the British Crown in 1776, to the rash of state-splittings that took place during the early years of the Republic, to Norman Mailer's secessionist 1969 campaign for mayor of New York City, the aura of divisibility has long been a part of the American tradition.

Throughout the years, the causes of such division have been as varied as the makeup of the American tapestry itself. Consider the movement that sprang up on the border of California and Oregon in 1941, when a group of disgruntled miners and loggers stormed the courthouse in Curry County, Oregon, brought several counties from Northern California on board to form a provisional government, and established the mining town of Yreka—pronounced "why-REE-kuh"—as the unlikely capital of the even more unlikely State of Jefferson. (The state's name, which recalled the independent streak of the most rebellious of the American founders, was settled on only after such proposals as "Orofino" and "Mittelwestcoastia" were mercifully rejected.) The rebel flag bore a pair of X's to indicate that the region had been doublecrossed by the governments in Sacramento and Eugene, and storekeepers put out change buckets for shoppers

who wanted to redirect their sales-tax pennies from the state treasuries. Local men armed with hunting rifles set up roadblocks along the Klamath River Highway, distributing copies of a Proclamation of Independence that explained that they were in "patriotic rebellion against the States of California and Oregon" and planned to "secede each Thursday until further notice."

The State of Jefferson turned out to be short-lived—the sudden death of its first governor was followed quickly by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, which sent the country into a fit of patriotic fervor that left little room for rebellion. But the spirit of '41 lives on in men like Leo Bergeron, a 70-year-old former rancher and 17-year resident of California's Siskiyou County. He wears a loosely-hung bolo tie with his golf shirt and shows no signs of losing the energy that once made him president of the state Grange and led him to run for county supervisor earlier this year. He's working to revive the State of Jefferson. "There's becoming a state, becoming a territory, and becoming our own country," he tells me. "The first two are the hardest because you need all sorts of approval from the legislators, but with the third option you can just tell 'em all to go to hell. It's really all about independence—we know this place, and we know how to govern ourselves. We don't need some a--holes from Washington or Sacramento telling us what to do."

A dreamer? Sure, but no doubt they said that about the original Jefferson, too. And it's not as if Bergeron and his

crew don't have their own King George in the form of the state and national administrations. Back in 1941, the uprising was the product of poor road conditions and a distant government that seemed more intent on exploiting the area's resources than attending to its residents and their livelihoods. Today, the Jefferson secessionists are motivated by that same distant government, which now imposes a staggering roster of environmental and other regulations that threaten the jobs of local farmers, miners, loggers, and even Klamath River medical marijuana growers. One way or another, these northernmost Californians and their Oregonian neighbors plan to find a way to put control of their communities back in their own hands.

Thomas Naylor insists that the ideological diversity that brings together the environmentalist-bashing, property-rights activists of Yreka and anti-globalization leftists like Sale and himself is a feature, not a bug, of the push for political self-determination. Asked whether

remains a contributing editor of *The Nation*—have not kept him from being accused, like Naylor, of being a crypto-racist because of his willingness to associate with the League of the South, takes a similar tack. Such diversity is “the reality of America today,” he tells me. “It’s more than just blue states versus red states, it’s all kinds of states wanting different things. So I say—let them. And if it turns out that the state I’m in does things that I don’t like, then I can go somewhere else nearby where an independent republic is to my liking.” It’s really none of his business, he says, what might go on in an independent South; all that the Vermonters want is the authority to keep the ever-encroaching Leviathan from continuing to entangle itself in their own corner of the woods.

To the extent that all this sounds at once deeply radical yet strangely familiar, things are exactly as they should be. The “so-called American Revolution,” Sale observes, “was in fact a war of secession, not revolt.” What’s more, the

halt. And not without reason: most historians still treat the traditional narrative of the Civil War as largely unproblematic, and the history of the American South with regard to slavery and race relations is nothing short of appalling. But then, the Northern states have their own repulsive history of racism, slavery, and the abuse and extermination of native populations. And there’s no disputing that the broader history of American territorial expansion—Hawaii, anyone?—has often been every bit as lawless and imperial as Lincoln’s worst critics accuse him of having been. These historical crimes do not belong only to one region. Moreover, even a negative assessment of the Confederate question does not disbar one from remaining open to the possibility that other secessionist movements might be rooted in more legitimate grievances.

Donald Livingston, an Emory University philosopher who has been similarly maligned over his distaste for Lincoln, suggests that the roots of America’s conflicted understandings of secession and states’ rights run deep. According to Livingston, who is at work on a book-length philosophical treatment of secession, present-day Americans are the inheritors of two “incommensurable Americanisms.” On the one hand, there is the Jeffersonian model of political order, which locates sovereignty in the small scale and thus treats secession as “a lawful act of a natural political society.” In contrast, the Lincolnian conception regards America as one nation indivisible—a “perpetual” and “indissoluble union,” in the language of *Texas v. White*—in which case “secession then would be revolution; it would be incompatible with government as such.” It was the dominance of the Jeffersonian conception that explains the success of the early split-state movements listed by

THE “SO-CALLED AMERICAN REVOLUTION,” SALE OBSERVES, “WAS IN FACT A WAR OF SECESSION, NOT REVOLT.”

we should be concerned about independent governments tossing out state or federal protections for the environment and civil rights, he tells me, “It’s hard to imagine anyone doing a worse job of solving most of our problems than the U.S. government, and over the long run these problems are best dealt with in the hands of small groups of people who’ve got a stake in them. Maybe the way that people in Northern California deal with the environment is not exactly the way that Vermont tree-huggers would embrace, but it’s their way.”

Sale, whose impeccable leftist credentials—he was a founder of Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s and

early years of the Republic established a tradition of states seceding from one another when they reached a certain size: Maine from Massachusetts in 1820, Tennessee from North Carolina in 1796, Kentucky and (more controversially) West Virginia from Virginia in 1792 and 1861. And as for the other events of 1861? Those “were not so successful,” he admits, “but they failed only because corporate America, becoming strong and expansionary in the North, found a dictator who could crush them.”

It’s here, of course, that things get tricky, since in many quarters the merest whiff of Civil War revisionism is enough to bring the discussion to a screeching

Continued on page 34

An Empire We Can't Afford

"LIQUIDATE LABOR, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers." So Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon advised Herbert Hoover in the Great Crash of '29.

Hoover did. And the nation liquidated him—and the Republicans.

In the crash of 2008, 40 percent of stock value has vanished, almost \$9 trillion. Some \$5 trillion in real estate value has disappeared. A recession looms with sweeping layoffs, unemployment compensation surging, and social-welfare benefits soaring. America's first trillion-dollar deficit is at hand. In fiscal Year 2008, the deficit was \$438 billion.

With tax revenue sinking, we will add to this year's deficit the \$200 to \$300 billion needed to wipe the rotten paper off the books of Fannie and Freddie, the \$700 billion (plus the \$100 billion in additions and pork) for the Wall Street bailout, the \$85 billion to bail out AIG, and \$37 billion more now needed, the \$25 billion for GM, Chrysler, and Ford, and the hundreds of billions Hank Paulson will need to buy corporate paper and bail out banks to stop the panic.

As Americans save nothing, where are the feds going to get the money? Is the Fed going to print it and destroy the dollar and credit rating of the United States? The nations whose vaults are full of dollars and U.S. debt—China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Arabs—are reluctant to lend us more. Sovereign wealth funds that plunged billions into U.S. banks have already been burned.

Uncle Sam's Visa card is about to be stamped "Canceled." The budget is going to have to go under the knife. But what gets cut?

Social Security and Medicare are surely exempt. Seniors have already taken a huge hit in their 401(k)'s. And as

the Democrats are crafting another \$150 billion stimulus package for the working poor and middle class, Medicaid and food stamps are untouchable. Interest on the debt cannot be cut. It is going up. Will a Democratic Congress slash unemployment benefits, welfare, education, student loans, and veterans' benefits—in a recession?

No way. Yet that is almost the entire U.S. budget—except for defense, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and foreign aid. And this is where the axe will eventually fall.

It is the American Empire that is going to be liquidated.

Retrenchment has begun with Bush's backing away from confrontations with Axis of Evil charter members Iran and North Korea over their nuclear programs and will likely continue with a negotiated peace in Afghanistan. General Petraeus and Secretary Gates are already talking "reconciliation" with the Taliban.

We no longer live in Eisenhower or Reagan's America. Even the post-Cold War world of George H.W. Bush, where America was a global hegemon, is history. In both relative and real terms, the U.S. is a diminished power.

Where Ike spent 9 percent of GDP on defense and Reagan 6 percent, we spend 4 percent. Yet we have two wars bleeding us and many more nations to defend, with commitments in the Baltic, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans we did not have in the Cold War. As U.S. weapons systems are many times more expensive today, we have fewer strategic aircraft and Navy ships than Ike or Reagan commanded. Our active-duty Army and Marine Corps consist of 700,000 troops, and a far higher percentage of them are support rather than combat troops.

With so few legions, we cannot police the world, and we cannot afford more. Yet we face a host of newly hostile nations we did not have in 1989.

U.S. interests in Latin America are being challenged not only by Cuba but Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Brazil, Argentina, and Chile go their own way. Russia is reasserting hegemony in the Caucasus, testing new ICBM's and running bomber probes up to U.S. air space. China, growing at 10 percent as we head into recession, is bristling over U.S. military sales to Taiwan. Iran remains defiant. Pakistan is rife with anti-Americanism and al-Qaeda sentiment.

The American Empire has become a vast extravagance. With U.S. markets crashing and wealth vanishing, what are we doing with 750 bases and troops in over 100 countries?

With a recession of unknown depth and duration looming, why keep borrowing billions from rich Arabs to defend rich Europeans, or billions from China and Japan to hand out in Millennium Challenge Grants to Tanzania and Burkina Faso?

America needs a bottom-up review of all strategic commitments dating to a Cold War now over for 20 years.

Is it essential to keep 30,000 troops in a South Korea with twice the population and 40 times the wealth of the North? Why are McCain and Obama offering NATO memberships, *i.e.*, war guarantees against Russia, to a Georgia run by a hothead like Mikheil Saakashvili and a Ukraine whose people prefer their kinship to Russia to an alliance with us?

We must put "country first," says John McCain. Right you are, Senator. Time to look out for America first. ■

Democratic Dominion

The decline and fall of the Virginia Republican Party

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

FORMER CHAIRMAN of the Virginia Republican Party Patrick McSweeney says he “knew [his] party had a long-term problem when [he] watched Mark Warner on ‘Meet the Press’” in 2004. The Democratic governor was being questioned on his proposed \$2 billion tax increase, one that would make up for budget shortfalls left by his Republican predecessor, Jim Gilmore. McSweeney noted that normally “this would be a great opportunity for Republicans” to paint Warner as a tax-and-spend liberal. But Virginia’s Senate Republicans had squandered that chance when they proposed their own solution—a \$3.7 billion tax increase, nearly double Warner’s. The Democratic governor turned to Tim Russert and said, “Heck, we’ve got the Republican Senate now. I’m the conservative alternative.”

It was a line that Warner would use over and over throughout the state, and one that made McSweeney boil. “We did it to ourselves,” he says ruefully.

What Republicans did was forfeit all their advantages in the Old Dominion. Republican presidential candidates have won Virginia in every presidential election for four decades. After the realignment of the 1990s, Republicans handily built majority after majority in both houses of the Virginia General Assembly. And just a decade ago, Republicans occupied the top three statewide offices, the first united administration in Virginia in living memory. Even Democratic congressman Virgil Goode found it advantageous to switch to the GOP as late as 2003.

But all that has changed. Mark Warner was succeeded by his Democra-

tic lieutenant governor, Tim Kaine. In 2006, Jim Webb unseated incumbent Republican senator George Allen. And now, in the race for the U.S. Senate seat of retiring Republican John Warner, Mark Warner is leading Jim Gilmore by a stunning 28 points. John McCain’s lead in the state has evaporated. On Intrade, a futures market for political outcomes, an Obama victory in Virginia commands 81 percent, compared to just 18 for McCain. The maverick may distinguish himself as the first Republican presidential candidate to lose Virginia since Barry Goldwater. How did Republicans lose so much so quickly in Virginia?

There are well-rehearsed demographic reasons for Republican decline. Northern Virginia has seen an influx of transplants from blue states in the last 15 years. The subsequent suburban and exurban development in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties precipitated even greater demographic change. In 2000, Hispanics made up just 9 percent of the population of Prince William County. By 2005, nearly one in five residents there was Hispanic. This doubling of the Hispanic population during the first half of this decade was reflected throughout the region.

But conservatives can still win statewide elections, even in the transformed north. Mark Tate, a former mayor of Middleburg and a longtime Republican activist, admits that in this region, sustained anti-government rhetoric is a hard sell when so many residents are employed by the federal government. “Just look at where they work,” Tate laughs. But, he says, “Republicans up here are issue voters. Some rally around

the life issue, some on gun issues, others on immigration, and increasingly we’re seeing Real ID folks.” Electoral results seem to prove Tate’s theory that social-issues voters can give Republicans victory.

George Allen’s loss to Jim Webb is instructive. Republicans in Virginia had timed an anti-gay-marriage amendment to coincide with Allen’s re-election campaign. Bob Marshall, a Republican state delegate, had written the bill hoping to elevate an issue he cared about while helping his party. But according to Marshall, “Allen did nothing with it. He didn’t link himself to it at all ... because Republican consultants who were running his campaign are so afraid of the social issues.” Allen lost by less than 10,000 votes. Despite its lowered profile, the anti-gay-marriage amendment received almost 160,000 votes more than Webb.

Marshall has represented a district that encompasses parts of Loudoun and Prince William Counties in the Virginia House of Delegates since the early ‘90s. And he remains one of the most conservative members of that body. He has opposed pro-amnesty members in his own party and, true to his pro-life convictions, he objected to the distribution of the morning-after pill on state university campuses. Marshall ran to Gilmore’s right in the last Republican Senate primary, criticizing the former governor for sitting on the board of Barr Labs, which makes the abortion-inducing pills. Though Marshall was outspent nearly 14 to one, he worked up strong support in his region of the state and lost the nomi-

nation by just 65 votes. Privately, Mark Warner acknowledged that the real enthusiasm at the Republican convention was for Marshall, not Gilmore. "Why would the base fight for Gilmore, when he doesn't fight for them?" Marshall asks. "Without them, you can't win."

But there are other reasons Republicans are losing ground in Virginia's exurbs. It turns out that exurban voters—the ones David Brooks memorably characterized as "Realtor Mom" and "Patio Man"—hate mismanagement. On this score, the Bush years have been a disaster for Republicans. Bush carried Fairfax County in 2000, and in 2002, Brooks wrote confidently that the exurbs were "generally the most Republican areas of the country." But two years later, Bush lost that same county to Kerry, and Democrats like Kaine and Webb captured further-flung counties for Democrats in the two years after that.

Robert Lang, a demographer at Virginia Tech's Metropolitan Institute in Alexandria, recently told the *Washington Post*, "What's damaged Republicans with Patio Man is the basic incompetence of government." Lang said that these voters are holding Republicans responsible for the situation in Iraq, for failures after Hurricane Katrina, and, most importantly, for the economic downturn that is draining value from their properties. Exurban voters haven't changed ideologically, but they are protesting the current GOP leadership. "The Democrats don't own these people—it's about the state of the Republican Party," said Lang.

By choosing Gilmore to run against Warner in the 2008 Senate race, Republicans were doubling down on incompetence, while providing nothing to social conservatives. In 1997, then Attorney General Gilmore beat Lt. Gov. Don Breyer in the gubernatorial race by appealing to conservatives and moderates on fiscal issues. Gilmore opposed Virginia's unpopular car tax. Social con-

servatives were only mobilized when Breyer unnecessarily attacked Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition. Republicans John Hager and Mark Earley rode his coattails into the lieutenant governor and attorney general offices respectively.

But Gilmore's phase-out of the car tax proved disastrous. The unpopular levy acted as a source of revenue for localities, so Gilmore promised to offset their losses with reimbursements from state coffers. Municipalities with many or expensive cars got huge rebates, even as state revenues shrank dramatically after Sept. 11, 2001. This set the stage for Warner to raise taxes and laid even more traps for Republicans on budgetary issues long after Gilmore left office.

Marshall calls out fellow Republicans like Virginia House Speaker William Howell for "campaigning as an anti-tax candidate" while helping to negotiate the creation of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, an unelected body that would be able to levy taxes to pay for road-building and Metro upkeep. "This isn't conservative and it isn't taking responsibility. This is like saying Pontius Pilate is our patron saint," Marshall says. The Virginia Supreme Court eventually struck down the bill as unconstitutional.

After the car-tax fiasco and Howell's gambit on transportation taxes, Virginia Republicans had effectively discarded their advantages on fiscal issues. Add to this the widespread feeling of abandonment among social conservatives, and the party was set for a total wipeout. With Republicans ceding more and more ideological ground, Warner sounded plausible telling voters that he was the fiscal conservative. Webb gingerly appealed to immigration restrictionists.

Now no issue is safe for Republicans. McSweeney reports seeing internal Republican polls that show normally bright-red districts like Hampton Roads—which has facilities for all four

branches of the military—overwhelmingly prefer Democrats on foreign policy. A late September Mason-Dixon poll had McCain's lead in Hampton Roads within the margin of error. Marshall says that even his conservative constituents wonder "why we're building an embassy the size of the Vatican in Iraq."

The foibles of the national party had retiring moderate Virginia Republican Rep. Tom Davis declaring, "if we were a dog food, they would take us off the shelf." McSweeney is just as pessimistic: "I can't think of one initiative of the Bush White House that has helped us. Not one."

While the trouble for the GOP in Virginia has unique characteristics—Gilmore's defective personality, George Allen's "macaca" moment, and ineffective House leadership—it is impossible to write off the trends that have been driving Republican decline as isolated to Virginia. The demographic changes in Northern Virginia resemble those in many other swing states such as Florida and Colorado. The careers of Jim Gilmore and George Allen mirror the fortunes of Ohio's Bob Taft Jr. and Mike DeWine. In each state, a reluctance to connect with social conservatives and rank incompetence scuttled the ambitions of a Republican governor and senator.

The problems with the national party that make Warner's sure victory over Gilmore so dramatic—the unpopularity of the war, dissatisfaction with the economy, and gas prices—affect every contested Senate race. Republicans are set to lose incumbent senators not only in purple states like New Hampshire and Colorado but normally deep-red states like North Carolina and Arkansas. As Republicans on the national level absorb another "thumpin'" in the House, and potentially lose their power to filibuster in the Senate, they would be wise to learn from McSweeney's analysis: "We did it to ourselves." ■

The Right to Remain Silent

Conservatives don't need a movement—and the best have no use for one.

By Austin W. Bramwell

THAT CONSERVATISM is in crisis is widely acknowledged. Some say that the movement has forsaken its principles; others that it has been corrupted by power; still others call for ideological renovation. All share the conviction that the crisis calls for a high-minded conversation as to the meaning of conservatism. To the contrary, in my view, the answer to the crisis—if there is a crisis—lies in ending that conversation altogether.

Until recently, few thought of conservatism as a worthy subject of inquiry. Most simply accepted the lexical understanding of conservatism as resistance to change. Only with the founding of that set of bureaucracies and sources of funding that became known as “conservative” did the debate as to the meaning of conservatism begin. Since then, nearly every treatment of conservatism has aimed at convincing, galvanizing, or scandalizing a movement audience.

Apparent exceptions only prove the rule. Michael Oakeshott, for example, characterized conservatism as a mere disposition—a theory that negates the very possibility of a conservative “movement.” But Oakeshott wrote precisely in reaction to the more ideological understandings of conservatism like those the movement was beginning to develop in America. The conservative movement continues to pay lip service to Oakeshott, but his theory of conservatism, if accepted, would fatally undermine the rationale for having a movement in the first place. The practical, “cash value” of every other theory of conservatism is that the movement should pursue this or that set of goals and not others.

In short, conservatism is not a philosophy or approach to political affairs that inspires the set of institutions known as the conservative movement. Rather, the conservative movement is a set of institutions that inspires the ideology known as conservatism. In the absence of a movement, the felt need to develop a coherent understanding of conservatism would evaporate.

Of course, the movement is not going anywhere and debates as to the meaning of conservatism will continue. Suppose, however, one agrees with this or that position closely associated with the movement. Does it follow that one should engage in movement-building activities? No. Non-movement conservatives have arguably done more to advance conservative ideas and without the burden of fitting them into an ideological system or wondering how they may affect their standing within an ideological movement.

A non-movement conservative by definition has no meaningful affiliation with movement conservative institutions. He may not even care whether others call him a “conservative.” (Indeed, movement conservatives may be quick to denounce him.) But that needn't limit his influence. On the contrary, consider the impact of these notable non-movement conservatives going back to the era of the movement's founding.

Joseph Schumpeter. Austrian by birth, Schumpeter wrote his famous *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* while a professor at Harvard. It stands out as the greatest (if also the most elliptical) defense of capitalist, European civiliza-

tion ever penned. Movement conservatives often take credit for the (partial) triumph of free-market ideas, but Schumpeter did more than anyone to persuade American leaders to preserve the capitalist system (to say nothing of the sort of semi-feudal, mixed constitution that he favored).

Jane Jacobs. When Jacobs wrote *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, urban planners, flush with federal dollars and enamored of modernist designs, were obliterating old neighborhoods in favor of thruways and high-rise apartment complexes. They never bothered to study how communities actually work. Jacobs did. The unplanned order of old buildings, mixed uses, and formal conventions, Jacobs argued, protects people from danger and makes decent lives for them possible. Urban renewal, by contrast, was immiserating its intended beneficiaries by depriving them of the organic features of real neighborhoods.

Tom Wolfe. Radical Chic, Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers, the Me Decade, the Right Stuff: Wolfe invented the very vocabulary for interpreting the carnival of American culture. He has exposed the degeneration of the civil-rights movement into race hustling, the moral one-upsmanship of wealthy liberals, and the vaporous egotism of contemporary religiosity. For every ballyhooed reform, Wolfe has shown the hypocrisy and cruelty beneath.

Jacques Barzun. The centegenarian polymath is probably the most civilized man alive. You can infer his politics from

his magnum opus, *From Dawn to Decadence*. He admires Montaigne, Montesquieu, Walter Bagehot, William James—each a fox as opposed to a hedgehog and, broadly, a skeptic. No one better embodies the proposition that civilization—the “best that has been thought and said by man”—is worth defending.

Noam Chomsky, E.O. Wilson, Steven Pinker. These men have doomed to oblivion what Pinker calls the “Standard Social Science Model” whereby something called “society” shapes a fictile human nature however it pleases. On the contrary, while human nature may express itself in an infinite variety of cultural forms, the underlying machinery can achieve only a finite set of ends. The Standard Social Science Model has inspired failed policies from the Gulag to No Child Left Behind, at incalculable human cost. Thanks to these scientists, civilization has a hope of finding a way out.

I admit that many will find this list absurd. Chomsky’s anti-American pamphleteering often overshadows his pioneering work in linguistics. Jacobs was arrested protesting the Vietnam War and expatriated to Canada. Wilson is a New Deal liberal, Barzun apolitical, Schumpeter too aloof to be categorized. I have, one might say, composed a roster of worthies and arbitrarily called them conservative.

Great non-movement conservatives have in common only that they have advanced particular conservative positions. None has contributed anything to conservatism as an ideological system. To movement conservatives, this is unsatisfactory. In their minds, conservative positions are only as strong as the underlying principles from which they allegedly derive. But the opposite view is also possible: namely, that conservative principles are only as strong as the underlying positions that they purport to tie together. Hate Noam Chomsky as

Ron Suskind’s book *The Way of the World* has been a focus of attention because of its revelation that the White House might have ordered the CIA to forge a letter falsely tying Saddam Hussein to Mohammed Atta,

an illegal act and possibly an impeachable offense. Far more scary, however, is another curious tale that weaves its way through Suskind’s book: “The Armageddon Test,” a plan to mount a major intelligence operation to infiltrate the world’s uranium black market, purchase enriched uranium, smuggle it into the United States, and eventually secretly construct a crude nuclear device. The objective was to identify the operatives involved in smuggling and marketing uranium and to demonstrate to politicians and the public just how easy it would be to construct a nuclear weapon and place it in the hands of terrorists. The proposed operation understated how difficult it would be to engineer a nuclear device in someone’s garage, particularly for a terrorist group that must operate clandestinely and with limited resources in a target country. The scheme also assumed that there is an established enriched-uranium smuggling network that one taps into like buying oil on the spot market. If such a market does exist, where is it and what has it done? Who buys the stuff? More broadly, one would imagine that turning loose a U.S. government agency to demonstrate how to obtain and smuggle the nuclear material to construct a bomb might not be a good idea.

And there is a bigger problem: the sudden appearance of a buyer with pockets full of money might in fact create a market for stolen uranium where none exists, converting worst fears into reality and bringing about the Armageddon that the program was designed to prevent. In intelligence circles, that is called “blowback.” Fortunately, sanity prevailed at CIA when the operation was put forward by the spooks working for the Department of Energy. The Agency refused to play ball, and the plan was eventually scrapped, though Suskind reports that there was some interest in contracting the operation out to Blackwater or a similar private intelligence group.



Senior-level officials in the intelligence community are nervous, bracing for an Obama presidency and expecting an end to burgeoning budgets and unquestioning White House support.

They also anticipate a more risk-averse environment and a cautious foreign policy, at least in the first year or two, in which they will have to maneuver carefully to establish a White House constituency. In the aftermath of November, it is feared that there will be suspicions about the political loyalties of many intelligence professionals, an overwhelming percentage of whom identify themselves as Republican. Many senior officers are reportedly preparing to resign and take lucrative positions with contractors like Booz-Allen and SAIC, which will exacerbate the most serious problem in the intelligence community—the hemorrhaging of experienced officers.

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much as you please. It remains the case that Chomsky's theory of a universal grammar not only revived the study of human nature but provided a model of how complex features of human society could be explained more generally. It instantly discredited behaviorism and has become part of the bedrock of the critique of social engineering. (Indeed, Chomsky describes his politics as an attack on social engineering as he perceives it.) Without Chomsky's watershed discovery, conservatives' belief in human nature would be only a postulate.

Movement conservatives have in fact produced few of the conservative ideas in general circulation. Even the movement's intellectual founders—men like James Burnham, Richard Weaver, and Whitaker Chambers—did their best work before they decided to pool their energies into a movement. Take any movement conservative position: the original insights usually came from someone with little initial interest in building a conservative movement. Originalism in constitutional law was developed by Raoul Berger, a Harvard liberal; free-market ideas by academic economists working within the mainstream of their profession; anticommunism by disillusioned leftists, only some of whom (from Chambers and Burnham to the later neoconservatives) went on to form or join the conservative movement; foreign-policy realism by émigré academic Hans Morgenthau. The repertoire of conservative cultural criticism is painfully derivative, which may account for the dreary sarcasm that usually accompanies it. Perhaps the only ideas for which the movement can take credit are the those of the "Projectarians," *i.e.*, the hawks affiliated with the Project for the New American Century. I am happy to concede these as one of the few examples of an intellectual achievement unique to the conservative movement.

Admittedly, the movement may still

have helped to advance conservative ideas even if has not produced very many. Yet even this boast rings hollow. Movement institutions have little to gain from winning new recruits. On the contrary, the largest payoff goes to the man who most effectively stimulates the passions of loyalists. When movement conservatives do seek a wider audience, their affiliations discredit their message. The imperturbable Charles Murray may enjoy the equivalent of a tenured position at the American Enterprise Institute, but his ideas have less impact as a result. Alan Wolfe derided him as "little more than a mean-spirited soul spouting quasi-academic language." However nasty, the charge sticks because Murray is a known conservative. Tom Wolfe in recent years has offered casual support for the movement. Critics now see him less as a chronicler of American culture than as a man of peculiar obsessions.

Only the non-movement conservatives have managed to upset the intellectual consensus, for they speak to the intellectual establishment rather than at it. Consider the major traumas of establishment liberalism: Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life*, Daniel Moynihan's 1965 Report on the Negro Family, E.O. Wilson's *Sociobiology*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Harvard commencement speech, Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*. At the time, not one of these authors was known as a movement conservative.

That leaves but one rationale for the movement: to preserve conservative ideas in an inhospitable world. No sentiment is more widely shared by movement conservatives than that they are an embattled minority fighting a hateful enemy. Yet none of the elements of movement conservative ideology by itself poses any career hazard. Mickey Kaus opposes open borders; Nicholas Wade of the *New York Times* and *New Republic* contributor Steven Pinker believe in the reality of race; Al Gore is a

critic of modernity; Jewish atheist Nat Hentoff is pro-life; Bill Cosby excoriates black culture; Camille Paglia lambastes feminists; Gregg Easterbrook is a skeptic of environmentalism. Some movement conservative views, such as support for the free market, are firmly a part of mainstream discourse. Others, such as a fondness for tradition, can be found all over the political spectrum. On close examination, it is difficult to find a movement conservative idea to which mainstream organs of scholarship and opinion are actually closed.

Take a hypothetical young talent with contrarian inclinations. Movement conservatives would counsel him to make his way up their ranks. But suppose he ignores their advice and joins the *New York Times*—or the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*. There, even if he never classifies himself as conservative, he pursues stories that expose the perverse incentives of well-intentioned policies, the human costs of mass immigration, or the reality that, as Steve Sailer puts it, "families matter." Not only are his eccentric interests not a liability, they may even prove to be an asset. His ability to see the world differently gives him a monopoly on stories that his colleagues cannot or will not spot themselves.

If the climate of opinion ever shifts, it will not be thanks to non-movement conservatives working within mainstream establishment institutions. My advice to young conservatives: avoid the movement, eschew its enticements. Above all, ignore debates as to the true meaning of conservatism. Heed instead the words of Ezra Pound: Make it new! After 60 years, the movement has succumbed to bureaucratic inertia and regression toward the mean. Conservative ideas will flourish only after conservatism is forgotten. ■

Austin W. Bramwell is a lawyer in New York City.

Permission Slip-Ups

Here is a thoroughly decent cove: Knight of Malta; Knight of the Garter; much loved husband, father, and grandfather; blood donor; and lord lieutenant of one of

England's oldest counties. Eggs don't come any better.

But not even Sir Gervais is perfect. Fifty years ago, in his first term at Oxford, he had a couple of pints too many and was arrested for causing an affray in a public fountain. He spent a night in the cells and appeared before the magistrates' court, where he was fined and given a lecture about "young people today."

Now he is planning a trip to the United States. He wants to take his six grandchildren to Wyoming, where his friend the bishop has a cousin who owns a ranch. It's all rather exciting for Sir Gervais. Being a well-bred Englishman, he has always liked America, but has never actually been there.

He could go in on the visa waiver program—and thus avoid the more penetrating bureaucratic questions—but nobody has told him about the program, and anyway he wants a U.S. visa stamped in his passport, to join the others he has accumulated over the years. It's the boy in him, the stamp collector. His estate manager has managed to obtain a copy of a visa application form, and we now find Sir Gervais in his library looking through it.

"Do you seek to enter the United States to engage in export control violations, subversive or terrorist activities, or any other unlawful purpose? Are you a member or representative of a terrorist organization as currently designated by the U.S. Secretary of State? Have you

ever participated in persecutions directed by the Nazi government of Germany; or have you ever participated in genocide?"

Sir Gervais smiles. What a rum set of questions. You'd think there was a war on. As he continues to read, however, his smile freezes. "Have you ever been arrested or convicted for any offense or crime, even though subject of a pardon, amnesty or other similar legal action?"

Sir Gervais looks thoughtfully, perhaps a little wistfully, out of the window. Who said the past was another country? If he tells the truth, and of course Sir Gervais will tell the truth, he could, presumably, be denied entry. Is Wyoming really worth the humiliation of having to discuss his past with perfect strangers? He puts down his glass of Madeira. The clock in the hall strikes... But enough. You get the picture.

The son of a friend of mine faces roughly the same difficulties as Sir Gervais. He got drunk a little while ago and misbehaved. As a result, he received a police caution. In the summer, he met a nice American girl in Moscow and now wants to visit her in the United States. First, however, he must discuss his "crime" with the embassy. He is not sure he wants to. How much simpler it would have been if he'd met a nice Syrian girl.

Of course, the Department of Homeland Security has a nation to defend, and it is not for aliens to carp or to mock. Yet bear this in mind: those probing ques-

tions were asked of visitors long before 9/11 "changed everything," and though they have made it easier in some cases to deport Estonian prostitutes and B-list Nazis, they have done nothing to keep out illegals or to defend American lives. None of the September criminals bothered to tell the authorities that they were seeking to enter the U.S. for the sole purpose of engaging in "terrorist activities." That would have spoilt the surprise.

But if everything did not change after 9/11, some things did. Visitors now have their fingerprints and photos taken when they land, and—let's be fair—the arrival hall at JFK seems a more orderly place than it was 20 years ago, and more discriminatory.

In the 1980s, it was much as I imagine Ellis Island had been at the turn of the last century, only the huddled masses were from the Third World as well as from Central Europe. I seem to remember Kikuyu tribesmen leading goats on pieces of string, Afghan warriors with baskets of chickens on their heads, Mongolian nomads with herds of yak. (Most of these people, of course, would have been driving Yellow Cabs within a week of their arrival.)

So maybe there have been improvements, security-wise, but to America's friends, U.S. immigration law now looks a tad paranoid. But hush my mouth! There can be no excuse for disrespecting the Department of Homeland Security. If next time I fly to New York the agreeable young Hispanic at the immigration desk checks my name against The List, turns white, presses a button beneath his desk and asks me to step to one side, sir, I'll have no one to blame but myself. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Synecdoche, New York*]

All the Stage Is a World

By Steve Sailer

STARTING WITH 1999's art-house sensation "Being John Malkovich," Charlie Kaufman has cleverly made himself the best-known screenwriter in America by refusing almost all publicity, except what he generates through his own intensely self-referential screenplays. The protagonist of his 2002 comedy "Adaptation" was a neurotic screenwriter named Charlie Kaufman, who was trying—and, unsurprisingly, failing—to adapt a *New Yorker* article about orchids into a big studio movie. Kaufman next dialed back the wit a bit in his masterpiece, the 2004 romantic drama "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

He combines Woody Allen's self-doubt with playwright Tom Stoppard's conceptual razzle-dazzle in the service of metaphysically surrealist plots reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges. Kaufman justifies his movies' intellectual demands by saying, reasonably enough, "One of the things I think is really exciting and joyful about the experience of being an audience member is figuring things out. When you make a connection, it's *yours*..."

Having had his say on love in "Eternal Sunshine," Kaufman is back to tell us all about life, death, and art in the first film he's directed. "Synecdoche, New York" is an ultra-ambitious combination of the great artist's summation of his life's work and self-parody.

Philip Seymour Hoffman plays Caden Cotard, a community theater director in Schenectady, New York mounting yet another revival of "Death of a Salesman" for the blue-haired subscribers. He's falling apart physically, suffering through an entire "House" season of medical syndromes. Caden's wife (Catherine Keener), an artist who paints microscopic pictures requiring magnifying goggles to view, tells him that he won't be going to her exhibition in Berlin. She's instead taking their four-year-old daughter and a friend, a sinister German lesbian (Jennifer Jason-Leigh).

At this nadir, Caden wins one of those obnoxious MacArthur genius grants. His health stabilizes, and the women around him ("Synecdoche" features seven excellent actresses) look more fondly upon him. He decides to unleash his creative powers on a vast theater project that will tell "the brutal truth" about, well, everything. In his bid for artistic immortality, he rents a cavernous warehouse in New York City, employs countless carpenters to build mockups of New York streets inside, and hires a cast of thousands to live out their lives under his artistic direction. (Apparently, MacArthur grants have gone up several orders of magnitude in value.) Rehearsals go on for decades without reaching opening night. As the cast ages, they hire younger actors to play themselves playing their roles.

A "synecdoche," which rhymes with Caden's hometown of Schenectady, is a figure of speech in which the part stands for the whole ("threads" for clothes) or the whole for a part ("the law" for cops). Kaufman genially explains that if his movie is a hit, "then people will be able to pronounce it and everyone will be able to know the word synecdoche—which is a good word to know."

In "Synecdoche," Kaufman indulges and satirizes both his aspirations and his failure to keep in mind the artistic value of abstraction and reduction. The film recalls Borges's one-paragraph parable *On Exactitude in Science*:

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City. ... In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been ... delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars...

Similarly, as the now aged Caden's artistic charisma wanes in the mid-21st century, the cast finally riots, chanting "Freedom!" Mobs of actors smash their way out of the set, which has grown to take over much of Manhattan.

Kaufman intended that the densely packed "Synecdoche" could only be fully appreciated after multiple viewings, but the first screening can be grueling. My wife loved it, but several people walked out. Yet it's occasionally hilarious, as when a real estate agent talks a character into buying a house that happens to be on fire. The scene is even funnier in 2008 than when Kaufman dreamed it up.

My advice is to lower your expectations, then go see it. ■

Rated R for language and some sexual content/nudity.

BOOKS

[*The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia*, Tim Tzouliadis, Penguin Press, 362 pages]

Great Red Hope

By Freddy Gray

THERE ARE MANY BOOKS about immigrants from the Russian revolution. Anyone with an interest in 20th-century history has read or heard of the aristocrats who fled from their murderous Bolshevik usurpers to become waiters, nightclub bouncers, and taxi drivers in Paris and elsewhere. We know almost nothing, however, about the thousands of working-class Americans who escaped the Great Depression to pursue happiness and a good wage in the newly minted Soviet Union. Until now, that is.

The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalinist Russia is the story of, as author Tim Tzouliadis puts it, “the least-heralded migration in American history.” In the early 1930s, the American dream was set in reverse: thousands of desperately poor citizens sailed away from the Statue of Liberty, full of optimism as they headed toward what they thought was the new frontier of human progress. Capitalism had failed—that rings a bell today, doesn’t it?—so communism must work.

Those who left for Russia were a mixed bunch. Some were revolutionary idealists, others were just professionals or factory hands swayed by Soviet advertisements in the American press promising fat paychecks and proletarian utopia. “Over there, you are building for tomorrow,” wrote a Denver miner to the Anglo-American newspaper, *Moscow News*, “Let us come and help.” Lefty intellectuals like George Bernard Shaw and *New York Times* journalist Walter Duranty nudged vulnerable compatriots east-

ward with their fawning encomia of Marxian industrial strength. “In the great financial storm that has burst upon us,” said Shaw, speaking on national American radio, “your own ship is sinking and the Russian ship is the only big one that is not rolling heavily and tapping out SOS on its wireless.” In 2008, as America again appears to be crumbling, we hear similar recommendations from the cognoscenti.

On reaching Russian soil, the Americans were greeted as heroes. Red propagandists saw the new arrivals as intrepid forerunners of the imminent worldwide revolution. At first, the foreigners reveled in their elevated status. They introduced the receptive natives to the delights of baseball and jazz. “American-ski beisbol” proved, briefly, to be a Soviet sensation. The state press admired the game’s “grace and complexity” and official leagues were soon established. The Stalin Auto Plant in Moscow urged its workers to “Play the New Sport of Baseball.” Tzouliadis even describes a photograph of two teams, the Moscow Foreign Workers Club and the Gorky Auto Workers Club, though sadly this image is not reproduced in the book.

RED PROPAGANDISTS SAW THE NEW ARRIVALS AS INTREPID FORERUNNERS OF THE IMMINENT WORLDWIDE REVOLUTION.

The Americans also established English-language schools in Moscow, Stalingrad, and Nizhni Novgorod. Pupils were inculcated with the glories of the revolution. The indoctrination went too far for some: when Charlie Nutter heard his young boy shout “Eta Stalin!” at a picture of the Soviet chief, he decided enough was enough. “We’re going home!” he said. “I am going to raise my kid to be an American.” But for other immigrants, blinded by hope, ideology, and euphoria, the future shone Red.

A number of them came to Russia to work in a Ford factory, building American cars to bring down the bourgeoisie. The Soviets, specialists in doublethink, had a typically paradoxical attitude

toward Henry Ford: on one hand, he was an arch-capitalist and enemy of the people; at the same time, though, he was also, as the leading proponent of mass mechanization, a genius of just the kind of progress and production that would define the ultimate triumph of communism. Stalin was so keen on “Fordizatsia” that he offered the company \$40 million in gold—an astronomical sum at that time—to build a massive industrial plant in Nizhni Novgorod, subsequently renamed Gorky. Comrade Ford, for his part, had long wanted to break into the Russian market and was eager not to lose out to the French giants, Citroen and Peugeot. Qualms about brutal and appalling worker conditions in the Soviet system were brushed aside. By January 1932, the first Ford Model A’s began to roll off the production line under a giant portrait of the Supreme Leader. A huge banner in the factory read, “Fulfill the Five Year Plan! Give us Soviet Fords!” Employees weren’t too disturbed by the ideological contradictions. A Ford mechanic in Detroit earned \$140 a month, whereas in the Soviet Union he was offered \$250 a month, free accommodation, a maid, 30

days vacation, and a car. Who could blame him for outsourcing himself to the East?

It didn’t take long, though, for Americans to wake up to the nightmarish reality of their surroundings. No amount of disinformation could cover up the disastrous failure of Stalin’s agenda. The more committed socialists tried to remain cheerful, but the poverty and oppression were too obvious to ignore. Many of the immigrants attempted to return home, only to be told that they had, often without realizing or agreeing to it, become Soviet citizens. Foreigners caught petitioning their embassy to send them back were branded enemies of the state. In the paranoid frenzy of the

Terror, the outsiders soon became regarded as troublemakers. Stalin was concerned that, if allowed to leave, the Americans would spoil the precious myth of a happy, prosperous Soviet Russia. So he had them arrested and executed, or shipped off to the gulags. There are heart-wrenching accounts of bewildered émigrés unable to comprehend the horror of their situation. "I am an American," screamed one man as the NKVD, the notorious secret police, dragged him away for interrogation. "You will pay for this! ...You cannot do this to an American!" But they could, and they did.

From here, the narrative inevitably starts to thin. Tzouliadis has painstakingly assembled information from many sources, and he has dug up plenty of valuable nuggets from Soviet and U.S. State Department archives. For obvious reasons, however, official records of totalitarian brutality tend to be incom-

plete and, as Tzouliadis confirms, many of the American embassy's files were destroyed in 1941 during the evacuation of Moscow. The evidence for the fate of many Americans vanished, their lives lost in the bleak, depressing mists that envelop so much of Russia's history in the 20th century.

Tzouliadis keeps his story alive, though, thanks to two previously published memoirs of Americans who survived Stalin's corrective facilities. Victor Herman and Thomas Sgovio—both members of Moscow's ill-fated baseball teams—were compelled to endure terrible conditions and cruelty in the gulags. Their accounts are harrowing, and their remarkable survival a biting reminder of the hundreds of thousands who didn't make it.

Forsaken is a sad and angry book. It is obvious that Tzouliadis, a television documentary maker turned writer, has been deeply moved by his subject. This gives his prose admirable energy and emotional verve. He is outraged by the American officials who failed to intervene on behalf of their compatriots. President Roosevelt comes across as completely naïve. "I don't dispute the logic of your facts," FDR is reported to have said to William Bullitt, a senior diplomat who warned him against cutting deals with the Soviets. "I just have a hunch that Stalin isn't that kind of man."

Tzouliadis's best attacks are aimed at the Western visitors who spent their time in Russia slavishly praising Stalin while he annihilated his own people. Ambassador Joseph E. Davies, the multimillionaire socialist and sycophant who ignored the plight of the Americans for particular scorn.

At times, however, the reader is left wishing for a lighter touch. Tzouliadis strives too hard to induce compunction. Too many of his chapters close with an abrupt, hanging lament—a powerful literary device, but one that is easily overused. The attempts to be poignant occasionally unbalance the book's structure. Empathetic threads are dropped into the more factual parts, only to disappear

for several chapters before re-emerging without proper explanation. This can undermine the emotion that Tzouliadis is trying to engender. It is hard to feel pity when confused.

Occasionally, moreover, the author's indignation seems misplaced. He is disgusted by the attitude of the U.S.'s senior diplomats, George F. Kennan among them, who advised against compelling Russia to hand back the Americans—hence the book's bitter title, "Forsaken." But it is hard to see, given the bubbling stew of souring world relations, how these officials could have acted more effectively. The sorry truth is that Kennan was right to suggest that the émigrés had to some extent reneged on their American citizenship by joining the Soviet workforce. And how could it possibly have been determined whether they had surrendered their passports willingly or unwillingly?

A bigger flaw, perhaps, is that the book attempts too much. Tzouliadis, in tracing the misadventures of the American-Soviet diaspora, is drawn into several bigger and more tangled webs. He explores the baffling relationship between Washington and the Kremlin in this period; the creepily opulent social scene at the U.S. embassy in Moscow (Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* was partly inspired by a party he attended at the ambassador's residence); the striking international ignorance about what was going on in Russia; and many other U.S.-related mysteries under the Hammer and Sickle. None of these subjects is irrelevant, and all are fascinating, but Tzouliadis is incapable of doing justice to so many strands in less than 400 pages.

These are quibbles, however. *Forsaken* is still a terrific read, at once horrific and absorbing. Through sheer pertinacity, Tzouliadis, an amateur historian, has unearthed an extraordinary episode in American and Russian relations that other, supposedly more professional, academics have missed. No doubt he could have made a superb TV series on *Forsaken*, if only there were any survivors left to tell the tale. ■

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)			
1. Publication Title		2. Publication Number	3. Filing Date
The American Conservative		1540986X	9/20/08
4. Issue Frequency		5. Number of Issues Published Annually	6. Annual Subscription Price
Bi-Weekly		24	\$49.97
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®)			
1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120 Arlington, VA 22209			
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer)			
1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120 Arlington, VA 22209			
9. Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)			
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12. Publication Title			
The American Conservative			
13. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below		9/20/08	
14. Extent and Nature of Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		12,870	
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		7,976	
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 13b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		8,828	
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		973	
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 13d (1), (2), (3), and (4))		1,189	
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 13c and 13e)		10,017	
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers 44 (page 4))		2,853	
h. Total (Sum of 13f and 13g)		12,870	
i. Percent Paid (13c divided by 13h times 100)		88%	
15. Publication of Statement of Ownership			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the 11/3/08 issue of this publication. <input type="checkbox"/> Publication not required.			
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner			
Kara Hopkins, Executive Editor			
Date 9/20/08			

[*Home*, Marilynne Robinson, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 325 pages]

Family Portrait

By Howard Anglin

"I AM MYSELF A LIBERAL," wrote Marilynne Robinson in her 2004 essay, "The Tyranny of Petty Coercion." "By that I mean I believe society exists to nurture and liberate the human spirit, and that large-mindedness and openhandedness are the means by which these things are to be accomplished. I am not ideological." That should sound familiar; no less a conservative than Russell Kirk declared that "conservatism is the negation of ideology." Conservatives will find a kindred spirit in Robinson. She champions the old-fashioned, almost quaint, virtues of restraint, prudence, and moderation. She is also perceptive enough to contrast her beliefs with "illiberalism (a word I use advisedly—there is nothing conservative about this new politics.)"

In her new novel *Home*, Robinson returns to Gilead, Iowa, the fictional setting for her 2005 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Gilead*, home of the neighboring Boughton and Ames families. Reverend Boughton and Reverend Ames, Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers respectively, were childhood friends and are now companions in senility. *Gilead* was Ames's story; *Home* is Boughton's.

Home is a family tale. Thirty-eight-year-old Glory Boughton, youngest of seven, has returned to Gilead to care for her dying father, the retired reverend, leaving behind—or perhaps escaping, she does not appear sure—a failed and unworthy engagement. Just as she settles into a new routine in her old home, her brother Jack arrives on the doorstep, fleeing his own heartbreak and God knows what else. Unlike his boisterous and good siblings, Jack does not have the knack for family life. A childhood truant, he has since slid into petty criminality and degenerate vagrancy. When he appears at the kitchen door, hungover and uncertain of a welcome, he has been

gone 20 years. His father has never stopped praying and worrying about him.

As this unlikely reunion unfolds, Jack and Glory form the base of an unsteady domestic triangle, with their ailing father as the focal point. The events that brought them to Gilead are revealed only slowly, often elliptically—the reader is always aware, if not informed, of the characters' important, unspoken histories. When the aftershocks of their pasts shudder into the present, they strain and threaten to snap the newly re-established familial bonds.

Home is less a story of action than a portrait of characters in time. Robinson has elsewhere praised the idea that "a biography was the passage of a soul through the vale of its making, or its destruction, and that the business of the world was a parable or test or temptation or distraction and therefore engrossing, and full of the highest order of meaning, but in itself a fairly negligible thing." In *Home*, Robinson takes three small-town souls, obscure data points in an old census and, by approaching them with the dignity they merit, she consecrates their lives and interactions. A contemporary Gilead native, viewing the two grown-up Boughton children and their father, would note little of consequence beyond the universal passage of one generation into the care of the next. But the emotional tremors that pass between Glory and Jack, Glory and her father, and above all between Jack and his father are as profound and consequential as episodes of Greek myth.

Or perhaps biblical myth is the better comparison, as the characters themselves cannot avoid seeing in Jack's homecoming the return of the prodigal son. But while the gospel parable leaves us with the joyful reunion of father and son, *Home* explores what happens next. Why do we assume the story ends happily? Jack's reasons for leaving have not changed, nor has his capacity to disappoint dissipated. What if the father's abundant goodwill and the son's good intentions are not enough?

Robinson has developed this theme elsewhere, in an essay entitled, "Family."

In a passage that illuminates the story of *Home*, Robinson writes:

Maybe the saddest family, properly understood, is a miracle of solace. It seems to me that our multitude of professional healers and comforters are really meant to function like the doctor in a boxer's corner, there to slow bleeding and minimize swelling so that we will be able to last another round. Neither they nor we want to think about the larger meaning of the situation. That is the opposite of solace.

Imagine that someone failed and disgraced came back to his family, and they grieved with him, and took his sadness upon themselves, and sat down together to ponder the deep mysteries of human life. This is more human and beautiful, I propose, even if it yields no dulling of pain, no patching of injuries.

Familial love, Robinson seems to be saying, by its nature accepts the pain that it entails. Indeed, it is the willingness to love through suffering and disappointment that differentiates familial relationships from what Robinson has elsewhere called "uniformly conditional relationships." *Home*'s harrowing lesson is that though family may be the greatest temporal recourse for comfort and peace, it is no guarantor of either. Certainly Jack's relationship with his father yields no dulling of pain.

Why Jack cannot change, if indeed he cannot, is an unexplained, because inexplicable, mystery. Perhaps he lacks, as Robinson put it in "The Tyranny of Petty Coercion," "a prevenient grace, which enables the soul to accept grace itself." Or maybe he cannot be different simply because then he would not be himself—a thought at once trite and disturbing in its implications. It is impossible to deny that Jack is a bad man, but he is also capable of good and is, especially in the eyes of his younger sister, a stubbornly sympathetic character. Like the old reverend, the reader cannot help but will on Jack's redemption and is devastated by each act of petty recidivism. Where

Gilead showed the solace that faith and family can bring, *Home* reminds us that at least as often they do not.

Home is not always an easy book to read, but the beauty of Robinson's art tempers its melancholy. Her prose does not dazzle with formal ingenuity or syntactic coloratura, but it strikes at the heart with guileless precision, and abounds with scenes and passages of stirring beauty and insight.

Home succeeds, like *Gilead* and *Housekeeping* before it, because Robinson engages with the deep pre-political loyalties that sustain us. Reverend Boughton, a Stevenson Democrat, and Reverend Ames, an Eisenhower Republican, may spar over Dulles's position on containment, but it is a superficial disagreement. What matters to them, and to any healthy society, are not ephemeral party allegiances but family, God, and the culture they have inherited and hope to pass on to their children. This is a deeply traditionalist sensibility, one that Glory Boughton describes as a "voice heard from another room, singing for the pleasure of the song, and then you know it, too, and through you it moves by accident and necessity down generations."

Without artists such as Robinson, without books like *Home* and the institutions they celebrate, our civilization cannot last long. The chain reaching back to antiquity is in danger of breaking. If it does, do not look to government to restore it. As Robinson writes in "Family," "when the state attempts to instill morality, the attempt seems intrusive and even threatening precisely because that work has traditionally been reserved to family, community, and religion, to the institutions of our diversity, a thing we have cherished historically much better than we do now, for all our talk." Robinson's words should be a tocsin, an urgent appeal to reorder our priorities in order to preserve the distinctly Western and American values and traditions that animate her art. If Marilynne Robinson is a liberal, then America needs more liberals. ■

Howard Anglin is a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

[*America and the World: Conversations of the Future of American Foreign Policy*, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, Basic Books, 291 pages]

Grown-Ups' Table

By Christopher Layne

FOR AMERICAN foreign policy, the last 16 years have been paradoxical. On one hand, it is now a truism that the Cold War's end placed the U.S. in a position of unprecedented global dominance. The past two administrations, however, did not employ this power wisely. The Clinton administration embarked on a foreign policy of social work, "democratic enlargement," and NATO expansion that culminated in U.S.-led interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo. As recent events in Georgia have made clear, these actions came with a price.

The George W. Bush administration, of course, has spent eight years outdoing its predecessor's muscular Wilsonianism. It recklessly invaded Iraq in the hope of bringing about the Middle East's democratic transformation. This policy has failed disastrously. Political reconciliation among Iraq's Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Kurds has not occurred, and the goal of a stable, unified Iraq remains a mirage. From the perspective of grand strategy, moreover, the Bush administration's policy has boomeranged, strengthening Iranian power and influence in the Middle East. Finally, coupled with the government's blunderbuss "with us or against us" approach to diplomacy, the military adventure in Iraq has resulted in the forfeiture of much of the international goodwill and diplomatic influence that the U.S. once possessed.

The missing ingredient from American foreign policy has been adult supervision—a point made clearly in *America and the World*, which is a transcription of a series of discussions between Zbig-

niew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, moderated by the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius, that took place earlier this year.

Granted, the good old days were never as good as we remember. Both the Carter and George H.W. Bush administrations—which Brzezinski and Scowcroft respectively served as national security advisers—made their share of foreign-policy mistakes. Nevertheless, this book shows that these figures tower over their successors intellectually. Compared to Brzezinski and Scowcroft, the neocon foreign-policy mavens are intellectual pygmies. Both men are erudite, knowledgeable about the world, and understand the broad historical trends that have shaped—and are always re-shaping—international politics. Most of all, as enlightened realists, Brzezinski and Scowcroft appreciate a crucial point that seems to have eluded others: even in a unipolar world, there are limits to American power.

Had U.S. foreign policy been under better stewardship after 9/11, it would not now be bogged down in the Messopotamia. Brzezinski and Scowcroft both warned before March 2003 that the administration had embarked on a dangerous and unnecessary course with respect to Iraq. As Scowcroft puts it, "Saddam, in fact, was quite well contained. And we had a big problem following 9/11 in dealing with this greater threat of terrorism. I thought going into Iraq would be fundamentally a diversion from our efforts to deal with terrorism." Moreover, Scowcroft insightfully notes that wars often create more problems than they solve. "War has a momentum of its own," he observes, and "one shouldn't engage in it without a careful analysis of the consequences."

Brzezinski and Scowcroft also realized that the neocon-inspired attempt to instill democracy in the Middle East was naive and risky. The Bush administration blundered fatally in jettisoning the longstanding U.S. policy of trying to maintain a semblance of stability in the Middle East and instead embracing a policy of promoting radical change. This

approach, Brzezinski observes, “ignored entirely the fact that we were plunging headlong into a region which bitterly resents and remembers colonialism under the British. And we were now viewed as the new colonial intruder.” Moreover, he says, the Bush administration’s “strategy postulated that the only way to have stability in the Middle East is to destabilize it. That is to say, overthrow the existing regimes, create the grounds for democracy, and you will have the fruits of liberty. We know the fruits of that.”

It was foreseeable that, rather than advancing U.S. interests, the Bush administration’s regime change and democratization strategy would backfire. As Scowcroft says, “we can’t remake the whole world at once ... if we try... we’ll end up with a region in which nobody will want to live, which risks being the direction we are headed.” Later, Scowcroft stresses that Wilsonian ambitions outstrip America’s means: “When we say we are going to make the world democratic, that’s too much. And in the attempt, as we are seeing right now, we risk creating more harm than good.”

There are two other key pieces of the Middle East puzzle on which Brzezinski and Scowcroft focus: Iran and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. On both issues, they are light years ahead of the current administration (and John McCain’s foreign-policy team). They understand the futility of threatening Iran militarily while isolating it diplomatically. Both men urge the U.S. to overcome its visceral hostility toward Iran and engage Tehran in direct negotiations. “We need to be able to engage Iran in strategic discussions that can lead to a framework in the region that will allow Iran to feel secure without needing to acquire nuclear weapons,” says Scowcroft. Brzezinski adds that there is “no reason to maintain a policy in which we seek to isolate Iran or we demand that they make fundamental concessions as a price for sitting down at the table with us.”

Brzezinski and Scowcroft recognize that the U.S. needs to take a more assertive role in forging a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine. As Scowcroft argues, “I think we have a moral responsibility, given who we are, to try to solve this problem.” In its own interests, and as a good ally, Washington has an obligation to warn Jerusalem against pursuing self-defeating policies. The status quo, Scowcroft notes, is not in Israel’s interest: “the risk for Israel of concluding an agreement is considerably less than the risk of remaining isolated in a bitterly hostile region and depending on the United States for its security.” And, of course, for the U.S., the widespread perception in the Islamic world that America is indifferent to the fate of the Palestinians helps fuel the animus of radical Islamic groups like al-Qaeda. “We have a vital interest in the Middle East,” Brzezinski observes. “But we are creating increasingly widespread resentment of America. At some point those chickens will come home to roost.”

Brzezinski and Scowcroft discuss much more than the Middle East. Indeed, this book is a *tour d’horizon* of contemporary foreign-policy agenda. While Brzezinski and Scowcroft are trenchant critics of America’s current Middle East policies, some of their other views are questionable. On China, for example, they are confident that the forces of economic globalization will enable Washington and Beijing to orchestrate China’s “peaceful rise.” They could be right, but most of what we know about great-power politics suggests that there remains potential for Sino-American conflict in the future.

Transatlantic relations are another issue where one can take issue with Brzezinski and Scowcroft. Both men are products of a generation shaped by the Cold War. They see U.S.-European relations as essential. Yet their notion of united West is nothing more than a socially constructed Cold War concept that policymakers used to engender solidarity in the face of the Soviet threat and to submerge latent transat-

lantic differences. Like most American policymakers, Brzezinski and Scowcroft profess to want a strong and independent Europe—including a robust European military capability—and the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance. Those two goals have always been antithetical, however. Neither man can quite accept that with the Cold War’s end an erosion of the transatlantic alliance is inevitable.

The two foreign-policy titans do disagree sharply on one issue: the wisdom of expanding NATO to include Ukraine and Georgia. Here, Scowcroft has by far the better of the argument. Brzezinski reveals his historically—and culturally—rooted fear of Russia and argues for an enlarged NATO. Scowcroft alludes to the dangers of this policy and reminds us that the George H.W. Bush administration, in orchestrating the Cold War’s end, was determined not to repeat the mistakes of the post-World War I peacemakers at Versailles. The administration bent over backwards not to humiliate Moscow and sow the seeds of a “Weimar Russia.” This prudence was brushed aside by the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, which indulged in unipolar muscle-flexing and giddily embarked on NATO expansion. It is not correct to say that Clinton and Bush ran roughshod over Russia’s security interests; rather, Washington acted as if those interests simply did not exist. That was short-sighted.

Russia may have been down and out during the 1990s—not for the first time in its history—but the U.S. policy of expanding its military reach to Russia’s borders was bound to come back and haunt Washington once the bear was back on its feet. Now the bill is coming. It is no surprise that Moscow has firmly opposed Ukrainian and Georgian inclusion in NATO. Scowcroft remarks that “we would invoke the Monroe Doctrine” if a rival great power sought to bring Canada and Mexico into its strategic orbit. He reminds us that these countries were integral parts of the Soviet Union. With respect to Ukraine, he adds, “there is a deep historic tie ... bringing

Ukraine into NATO would be seen by the Russians as a further attempt to humiliate them." Scowcroft emphasizes that America's long-term strategic interest lies in having a solid relationship with Moscow, which means accepting Russian predominance in its near-abroad—its historic sphere of influence. The United States should want a Russia that is "not irredentist, not hostile, not resentful." Achieving that, Scowcroft suggests, "may mean going a little bit out of our way to make them feel equal." Here we see the clear contrast between the views of a true foreign-policy "Wise Man" and those of the neocons who have been chomping at the bit for confrontation with Russia and comparing Georgia today to Czechoslovakia in 1938.

The next administration will face many daunting challenges. Perhaps the biggest will be dealing with the decline of American power. Historians might look back at August to October 2008 as the moment when U.S. hegemony ended. The Beijing Olympics heralded China's great-power emergence. The fighting in Georgia marked Russia's return as a great power. The financial meltdown underscored America's fiscal overextension. A bankrupt superpower is not a superpower. Inevitably, there will be a need to rethink the scope of America's external aims and ambitions. In the coming years, we can only hope that policymakers embrace the enlightened realism of Brzezinski and Scowcroft. As Scowcroft puts it, "realism is a recognition of the limits of what can be achieved. It's not what your goals are, but what you can realistically do." After 16 years of excess and hubris, it would be refreshing to see U.S. policymakers adopt this line. ■

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Untied States

Continued from page 20

Sale, while the rise of the Lincolnian one led to the crushing of the Confederacy and dearth of later secessionist movement.

The Jeffersonian view, Livingston notes, is similar in many important ways to the theory of human society put forward in Aristotle's *Politics*. Aristotle not only holds that man is a "political animal"—that is, a creature suited to life in a *polis*, or city-state—but also claims that there are natural limits to the extent of a *polis*: "the best limit of the population of a state," as he puts it, "is the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life, and can be taken in at a single view." And what exactly is this number? Livingston points to Athens, Venice, and Florence, each of which had populations in the tens of thousands, as political communities large enough to have attained the Aristotelian values of "life and high culture."

The modern American empire, which Naylor eagerly compares to the Soviet Union in its declining years, may simply be too large for the good life—and it's not only the outright separatists who chafe against the strictures of centralized federal authority. The Free State Project, for example, aims to recruit enough liberty-minded citizens who are willing to move to New Hampshire to turn the state into a libertarian haven. At present, five years into their drive, over 8,700 individuals have committed to head to the Granite State once FSP reaches a critical mass of 20,000 members. The FSP agenda is a decidedly non-secessionist one: the goal is simply to carve out a corner of America where it is once again possible to live free.

Back in Yreka, the prevailing sense is that an arrangement more like what the Free Staters are after would be good enough, if only the powers that be would allow them to give it a try. The odds of that are slim, though, and as Jefferson activist

Brian Peterson shows me around the five-acre plot that he and his family recently bought on the south end of town, the frustrations of a rural resident in a state dominated by voters from coastal cities become apparent. The landowners and area environmentalists have "really been starting to work things out on our own," he says, "People have been finally sitting down and talking, and really beginning to make some progress." Ultimately, though, they're all subject to regulators living hundreds or thousands of miles away, whose standards for a reasonable compromise are likely to be quite different. That independence that Bergeron talked about seems a long way off.

Peterson, who grew up in San Francisco and then skipped town as a teenager to move in with his grandparents in Yreka, was instrumental in reviving the push for secession during the Clinton years, and he laughs as he talks about the number of phone calls he gets from reporters who want to interview him. Thanks to Bergeron, he says, the Siskiyou County Grange has made consideration of Jefferson statehood an official "project." But much of what that means is that they've formed a bunch of committees and rested content with that. "Now and then I ask myself if it's all worth it," he admits, "but then I ask myself, Who else would do it?" And so he finds the time, in between his gardening and his couple of jobs, to update the Jefferson website, respond to queries, and fill orders for dark green T-shirts with the double crossed logo on front.

"Sometimes it feels like we're back in the 1770s or 1780s," he muses, "sitting around at the Constitutional Convention or something like that." No doubt Thomas Jefferson would have been proud. ■

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Arrested Development

The West pours billions into backward countries to encourage economic development. Can it work? I fear not.

I live in Mexico and travel a lot in the “developing world,” most of which isn’t. I ask myself why not. Inevitably I conclude that a country’s progress depends on its human capital. Most countries just don’t have enough. They will adopt the portable forms of Western technology—cellphones, video games, cyber cafés—but not much more.

I wish this were not true. The poverty of countries like Bolivia and Cambodia is not pretty. If giving them billions in aid would transform them, I would favor it. But it won’t.

What exactly causes near intractable nondevelopment? A few reasons are painfully obvious:

First, a lack of interest in schooling. This is different from a lack of schools. You can build schools, but you can’t build a desire to attend them. In many countries, children go to school for three or four years, or not at all, and then care for the goats. Their parents also care for goats, this being all they have ever done. It is all the children will ever do.

I don’t say this to be cruel. I wish it weren’t so, but it is. There is just nothing in many cultures that recommends study. Kids will drop out to care for the goats when free schools are available, when tuition in universities is free.

A fourth-grade education may barely qualify them as literate for the CIA Fact Book, but it is doom in a techno-industrial world.

A second reason for irremediable backwardness, or something very close to it, is the lack of American-style ambi-

tiousness. I know: this sounds like contempt for the downtrodden. Yet it’s true. Pretending otherwise accomplishes nothing.

Pedro, aged 17, living in a village on the slopes of the Andes, thinks only of getting married the next year. He does so, has a kid or two, and that’s the end of his path. He may be very bright and work hard. Yet his world stops at the edge of what he knows. He will play video games in the local *tiendita*, slave away to buy a car, and then spend his life driving around the plaza and honking at his buddies.

By contrast, American kids are exploratory, wait eagerly to go to college on the other end of the continent, backpack through Asia, go for the Ph.D. in chemistry. Goals may change, but there are goals. Americans see life as a progress toward desired ends. The Third World thinks of life as a fixed condition.

And so the human capital in so many countries is wasted hoeing beans—often not because they couldn’t do things differently but because it isn’t how they think. American television, often the only exposure they have to a culture other than their own, isn’t enough to effect change.

Third comes corruption, to a degree that most Americans can’t readily imagine. In many countries, everything is for sale. A blind man could buy a driver’s license from a crooked cop, which is to say any cop. The government sells the country’s resources—teak, oil, whatever it has—abroad and the money goes to

Switzerland. The cops are actual criminals. Corruption rots the society at every level.

The problem is not that corrupt officials exist. Every country has them. The problem is that the culture condones corruption, expects it, regards it as part of communal existence. Corruption, not study, is the ladder up. And of course, pouring billions of aid into a corrupt country just transfers it to the bank accounts of the rulers.

Solving concrete problems is easy or at least possible. Changing a culture is hard.

The foregoing problems exist in varying degrees in different countries. For example, Mexico qualifies as Third World but distinctly upper Third World. People in the States ask odd questions (“Does it, you know, like, have paved roads?”) and think the country is primitive. It isn’t. Mexico operates two major airlines, has a good telecommunications system, a reasonably functional national health service, a sharply reduced birth rate, and works (successfully) to end its habit of subjugating women.

Yet though school is mandatory, many children don’t go or barely do. Where I live, my stepdaughter, seriously smart, is regarded as stuck up because she makes high grades in the Prepa, the feeder system for the University of Guadalajara. This is the exact parallel of the charge of “acting white.” (Both Prepa and university are free.) Bare literacy, or none, isn’t going to work in 2040.

When the Army was running its “Be All That You Can Be” ads, I saw a cartoon of a sergeant saying to a bedraggled private who was raking leaves, “But Ferguson, you are all you can be.” Would it were not so. ■

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A portrait of Robert H. Bork, an older man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark.

ROBERT H. BORK

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